

RPG REVIEW

Issue #9, September 2010



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ADMINISTRIVIA

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EDITORIAL

by guest editor, Karl Brown

Welcome to the bestiary and non-humans edition of RPG Review. The aim of this special was to discuss the creatures that populate our games. Every genre features non-humans be they Hivers, AI, dogs, werewolves, or dragons. So this rpg review attempts to contain something useful no matter what game you are playing. The bulk of the articles within this issue fall within our theme.

Biophysics for Gamers tackles the root of a common problem in gaming: unrealistic evaluation of non-human capabilities. There are two sources of this problem. The first is anthropocentric game design with rules for non-humans tacked on. Often attribute ranges for the game are hard-wired for the range of human abilities which animals regularly exceed. This is a problem because most non-zoologists make incorrect assumptions about animal capabilities. Generally, animals are much stronger than people realize. A chimpanzee is stronger than a man three times its weight. At these high values the math of many games breaks down. Humans also have their own superior abilities, rules for distance running based on human capability will overestimate the endurance of just about every other mammal; humans are extraordinary distance runners. Biophysics for gamers does not solve problems for portraying non-humans in game systems but does give you a means of assigning realistic values to animals.

Some still mistakenly believe that a thick line separates humans from beasts, as far back as 1726 Lemuel Gulliver knew otherwise. Cross the imaginary line when you play bestial Yahoos in FATE. This is the first of two articles this issue that describe an unusual species for use as player characters. The capabilities of Yahoos are very similar to humans so adapting this article to other game systems should be relatively easy. However, true roleplaying of the non-human is all about the personality, I will let you be the judge as to whether Yahoo behavior is all that different to that of humans.

Here Be Dragons... Or so said the old maps. In actual play though dragons are largely absent particularly among the ranks of player characters. Some new games have systems able to handle dragon PC's, Fantasy Craft and Legends of Anglerre are notable, but older games built around the human player character premise struggle with dragon PC's. This article gives a thoroughly play-tested dragon class for producing PC's and NPC's suitable for several 'Old School' games. More dragons, and more D&D, can be found in the story "Dragons of the Bilybara", although most of the statistics are for other surreal creatures from Australis.

The Sentient Species Generator for Dr Who is exactly what it claims to be, a computer code for the random generation of intelligent aliens for the new Dr Who game. Perhaps one of the sentient creatures that it may not generate is the were-house, a rather amusing but deadly homestead, or for that matter a conscious sword, Saif-Alim.

This issue's interview is with Steffan O'Sullivan who author of the GURPS Bestiary and GURPS Bunnies and Burrows, surely an appropriate guest for our own bestiary special.

I also strived to include as much original artwork as possible. The submitted artwork has enhanced the appearance of this issue and I hope that other illustrators are inspired by these examples into submitting quality work for future issues. Once again we must thank Jensen Schmidt for his excellent contributions.

I will never disparage an editor again*. As a veteran reader/supporter of rpg review since its inception, a professional fascination with biology, and long time player of rpgs Lev picked me as an obvious guest editor for a 'Bestiary and Non-humans Special'. I thought this would be easy. I have a little experience in (very basic) layout and a huge backlog of articles I can call on to fill the last few pages. I have learned that the real skill of an editor of a magazine like this is the ability to get contributors and get the best out of them. With this in mind I'd like to thank all those who contributed, Lev, and his extensive network of contacts for saving my bacon.

*I will certainly continue to dis those who think they can do without one.

Karl David Brown



GBH © 2009 by Jensen

HOT GOSSIP : INDUSTRY NEWS

by Wu Mingshi

Hosei bo Mr. Karl,

You know I not name you Mr. Carl, because then I think your name sound like Mr. Charl, which make Minshi think of Dutch name which probably means Karl, so we do round circle, la? But congratulations you to, now I don't have to keep writing to Mr. Lev for being late with RPG Review again. You can be special late too!

First news from Mingshi is about Green Ronin have license to make DC Adventures RPG Books. This 75th birthday for DC so very good time for new DC roleplaying game, la? Heroes Handbook has already been released. Remember Green Ronin do Mutants & Masterminds, very good superhero game for long time now. DC Adventures planned to be based on new edition of Mutants & Masterminds.

Other superhero game is new edition of Champions. Good interview with Mr. Long in Issue 3, now new edition of game. Edition six! Champions very special game that might live forever! Did you see that it also win silver award for best rules at Ennies? Gold goes to Diaspora, science fiction game based on FATE system. Minshi correctly predict Pathfinder as best product, but little bit of surprise to see the same game line win Best Adventure, Best Accessory, Best Cover Art, Best Interior Art, Best Cartography, Best Production Values, and Best Publisher.

Maybe next year new supplement Eureka by Engine Publishing win some award? It provide 501 adventure plots for when GMs creation mind power reach exhaust point. Also keep eye on Fiasco by Bully Pulpit Games, where disaster keep piling up and become worse rather like Nicoll Highway collapse or Spyros explosion, except we don't talk about them anymore. After all only workers died. No, Mingshi make bad comment. Fiasco supposed to be funny game. Nicoll Highway and Spyros not disaster, but still fiasco. Maybe bad comment because Mingshi play Paranoia straight. Maybe Mingshi live in Paranoia city, with many Lau Ter Khor.

For those who live in very dark future very far away new Warhammer 40K RPG book now out by Fantasy Flight Games, Deathwatch follows Dark Heresy and Rogue Trader. Very glossy book again and well known theme. All for the Emperor! Mingshi try very hard and no make obvious now-time political comment again.

OK, that's enough from me this quartering! Send me you news and gossip!

Mingshi! mingshi@rpgreview.net



BIOPHYSICS FOR GAMERS

by Karl David Brown

When assigning values to a creature's attributes there is no substitute for thorough research but some facts are too hard to find or nobody knows. Luckily some basic physics came to the rescue. All the rules upon which everything else was built had already been discovered all I had to do was work out were to look. Anyway here are these simple foundations unearthed and laid bare.

This discussion assumes a game system that rates humans at about 50 and uses a linear range, i.e. 100 strength could lift twice as much as 50. You will need to adjust the scale of the attributes to the game system you are using. For example if in your system a typical human is STR10 simply divide the results of the formula by five.

Also assumed is that the animals are from some version of Earth or a very Earth-like world that implausibly uses pretty much the same biochemistry as Earth life. This assumption is true for most fantasy settings and most science fiction (which is written by engineers and arts students). However, some well-researched modern science fiction has realized that different worlds and different molecules (life does not have to use DNA based hereditary and 'animals' don't have to be mostly protein and water) can produce very different ranges to those generated by the formulae presented here. For realistic aliens any of the values discussed here could be very different perhaps even by orders of magnitude! Such realistic aliens would be the topic of a whole other article. However I have included a note on alien life in the discussion of metabolic rates.

Basic facts about the average human.

Mechanics are usually based on the human range of abilities tap into our self-interest that makes Homo sapiens the species about which the most is known and readily accessible. The below rough



averages were rendered down during the process.

Mass 60kg
Height 17dm
Volume 59L
Surface area 2m²
Longevity 75years
Food / day 1.2kg
Water / day 3.0litres
Sleep Period 8hours

Finally some attributes common to most settings were set arbitrarily at a convenient value, 50, for typical humans these are given below.

Strength
Reflexes
Body/Wounds

Basic Relationships

A few basic biophysical relationships hold true for most real living organisms. They are the key to educated guesses of the unknown and placing values for statistics and scores of organisms. All of these are given in terms of mass (kg) except mass itself. In each the first number after the '=' is a constant calculated from the human averages above.

Mass (kg) = 0.013 x height³
Height/Length (dm) = 4.3 x mass^{1/3}
Surface Area (m²)= 0.13 x mass^{2/3}
Also 0.0069xheight²
Volume (l)= 0.98 x mass
Strength*= 3.3 x mass^{2/3}
A more detailed formula is =7.2 x (Mass^{2/3}
x F)-mass
Body (Wounds, hits etc.)= 3.3 x mass^{2/3}
Metabolic Factor = 0.046 x mass^{3/4}
Reflexes = (1/metabolic factor) x 50
Longevity = 12 x mass^{1/4}

As all of these formulae are based on the human values they provide only rules of thumb, other considerations are discussed below.

Mass and Height/Length are based on human values and will be completely wrong for most non-humanoids. Fortunately these statistics are usually easy to find or invent. Mass can also be derived from a volume guestimate as the two are roughly equal in Earthly animals.



Surface Area is very variable for different body shapes and the formula given is very rough even for humanoids. Use an average of the two formulae. For winged beasts use wingspan rather than height. Alternatively, for non-humanoids workout roughly using formulae for basic shapes; a snake is almost a cylinder. Surface area is most often used for worn items so ignore the effects of huge ears or other flat or wrinkly organs or hair and other body coverings.

Volume is for land animals for aquatic animals the constant will usually be close to one. Other stranger types must be dealt with on a case by case basis. However for most circumstances I assume for animals that,

Mass (kg) = Volume (l). This allows easy calculation and allows enough room for comfort in enclosed spaces.

The remaining formulae are for scores and assume that the creature being described obeys the rules of physics as we understand them to apply to living creatures. In some settings these formula should be tossed out of the window. For example in the world of Gulliver's Travels the inhabitants of Lilliput and Brobdingbag are directly scaled versions of normal people surrounded by similarly scaled up objects so strength, body and metabolic factor must be multiplied by the same number as mass.

Strength varies greatly, even among creatures of similar shape, to fit the demands of an organism's lifestyle. Carnivores and brachiatons are often very strong. A chimp for example is six times stronger than a human of the same mass. An ape is not just a human in a hairy skin the skeletons offer better leverage, they carry more muscle per mass, and the very proteins of the muscles produce more power than those of human muscles. The standard formula assumes that the creature can lift its own body. The more detailed formula has a built in upper limit were a creature of given proportions can't lift its own mass the strength is zero or less. This formula has a factor F that represents the build of the creature, for human body proportions F=1, a chimp would have F=6, a lion F=5. While more 'realistic' this more detailed version can limit creativity this formula would never allow the creation of King Kong. Strength can also be calculated from maximum carrying capacity (kg) divided by five or maximum lift divided by two. Lifting and carrying capacity for many animals can be found in records books but remember these sources list the maximum for the species so halving the figure may be in order. For flying creatures sometimes the mass the creature can lift is given, for winged flyers strength is about double this mass.

Strength is often one characteristic that game systems struggle with. Firstly, game designers set many animal strengths much too low. By human standards many animals are incredibly strong. Secondly, many games resort to a non-linear scale for strength. If this is the case in the system you are using figure out carrying capacity (x5 the strength from the formula) and use the encumbrance tables from your game to assign strength.

Body assumes that the amount of punishment an animal can take is based on structural strength, which in turn follows the 2/3 rule. Creatures that are 'overbuilt' for their size may have higher body scores. Armored organisms, like the tortoise or rhinoceros will not fair any better as natural armor is accounted for separately.



Metabolic Factor is used to determine all sorts of things from food required to surviving poison. A typical human has a factor of x1.0, a creature with a factor of 2.5, for example, requires two and a half times as much food, water, oxygen etc. as a human. Cold-blooded organisms have a metabolism of one tenth that of warm bloods given by the formulae. When calculating the food required vegetarians, except fruitivores, typically require ten times the amount needed by a carnivore of the same mass. Aquatic mammals, which get all their fresh water from their food, add double the water requirement for their mass to their food intake.

A reasonable starting point for guesses about aliens with unusual biochemistries, such as organisms using liquid ammonia instead of water, or operating at higher or lower temperatures for every 10oC above 37oc double metabolic factor and for every 10oC below halve metabolic factor. For anaerobic organisms that do not use oxygen divide the rate by twelve.

While metabolic factor indicates the ‘how much per unit of time’ of metabolism the heart rate is only a guide to how quickly. In most instances metabolic factor is more useful.

The formula for longevity works for most mammals but not humans. For hominids double the figure. Cold-blooded animals tend to live longer, up to ten times as long if they survive. One little known fact is that your humble pond hydra seems to be immortal barring misadventure. Evolution does not overbuild, creatures that are likely to fall prey to predators or misadventure live close to the formula’s result but those that have evolved ways to avoid risk, such as wings, shells and intelligence, may have much longer life spans. There is an evolutionary hypothesis of the rise of aging inspired by our friend the immortal hydra relating reproduction timing to longevity. Species that spread the production of offspring over their lifespan and have the ability to avoid hazards select for longevity. Consider sea turtles: big tanks with few predators (when adults) that produce offspring year after year decade after decade. Sea turtles with mutations that affect them later in life end up producing less offspring. Now consider mice they produce lots of offspring every year but they are small, vulnerable and tasty. The bulk of the mouse population is born to young parents so generation after generation mutations that affect mice as they get older are passed on, the net effect is short lived rodents.

Research

Even given the above formulae I still use them as a last resort, there is no substitute for research. Other attributes can only be found by research. Some including sleep period, longevity, and speed can be derived from the description of the attribute. Speed, for example, is distance covered in a combat round, however long that is in you game. Others, such as intellect, require careful consideration of the facts and then a judgment to be made.

Recommended Resources

The Biology of B-Movie Monsters, Michael C. LaBarbera
<http://fathom.lib.uchicago.edu/2/21701757/>

(Currently offline by available through archive.org and google cache).

On Being The Right Size. Famous 1928 by J. B. S. Haldane.
<http://irl.cs.ucla.edu/papers/right-size.html>

Yahoo! A Species for Gulliver's Trading Company

by Karl David Brown Illustrations by Charles Brock.

Gratuitous plug time!

This excerpt from the *Gulliver's Trading Company* game describes the bestial Yahoos as a FATE 2e aspect. Small alterations have been made so you can use these as PC's or NPC's in other FATE games.
The beta edition of the *Gulliver's Trading Company* game is available for free at:
<http://rpgreview.net/node/40>

Yahoos are odious animals resembling humans found in Houyhnhnm Land. These brute beasts have no language and no crafts beyond the digging of shallow dens.

Some have speculated that Yahoos are a race of humans (possibly descended from two stranded Europeans) if so then they are so deformed as to be undeserving of that name. Yahoos are hairier than any true human. Males have especially thick hair in a ridge down their backs, on the fore-parts of their limbs, and on their shoulders as well as a goat-like beard. This hair can be straight and lank or made frizzy by poor treatment. The females have long lank hair on their heads and a down evenly covering the rest of their bodies. Yahoo hair of both genders is of all the colours found in European peoples and their skin is a buff brown, probably darkened from exposure to filth and the sun. The deformed physique of these brutes is made even more repulsive by their inclination to avoid cleaning and bathing with the exception of wallowing in the nastiest filth they can find. A yahoo's face is as deformed as its body, broader than any proper human with a flattened nose and wide mouth framed by large lips. The native animals of Houyhnhnm Land react badly to Yahoos having learned to fear or despise them.

Yahoos are very physically capable, even as toddlers they swim well and climb like apes. They are stronger than humans and have greater agility. They have nails hooked and pointed like claws. For the most part they travel on all fours and can easily outrun a man with this gait. Yahoos reach maturity by eleven years of age and are sturdy enough to serve Houyhnhnms by their twelfth year.

Both males and females are able fighters, yahoos will quarrel with each other regardless of gender. In combat they are initially fierce attacking with strong nails that are used like claws. Lemuel judged that a single Yahoo would be a match for a dozen unarmed Europeans. If driven back they will retire to a safe distance to howl, grimace, and throw faeces. Yahoos fear Houyhnhnm enough to never raise a hand against the noble horses.

The diet of Yahoo's consists of raw flesh, carriion, herbs, berries, and roots. From the Houyhnhnms they steal and consume asses, dogs, cats, and milk. There is an intoxicating juicy root Yahoo's are very fond of it.

A Yahoo character is at best half-tame, does not speak, and is without any language beyond understanding few simple commands. This limitation does not prevent them from howling, growling, screaming and snorting, often to excess.





'Kept them off, by waving my Hanger.'

in teaching the brutes.

Names: Yahoos do not have proper names. They may have a particular growl or screech that they refer to themselves by and *may* respond to a name given to them by a Houyhnhnm or other trainer.

Players can invoke this aspect to: swim, leap, climb, run or take other simple physical movements with speed but not grace; fight unarmed or with sticks and stones; throw faeces; resist damage due to innate toughness or matted hair; use uncouth agility to dodge blows, perform a feat of strength, catch and eat a weasel; perform a corrupt act, to lampoon the actions of a European.

Referees can invoke this aspect to: have the Yahoo's pungent body odour give away his hiding place, have an NPC back away in disgust, have fear hinder the character's attempts to attack a Houyhnhnm, tempt the player into greedy, lusty, lazy, or angry behaviour at an inappropriate time.

They are greedy and quarrelsome creatures that often fight over meat or coloured stones even if there is an over-supply. They will eat until sick. In other behaviours the Yahoos have primitive versions of behaviours seen in human cultures with the exception of marriage.

Yahoos have no government or organisation beyond quarrelsome groups of forty or so individuals governed by the most deformed and malicious among them who is aided by a favourite.

Special Rules: A Yahoo character is stupid though cunning. Yahoos can only ever learn skills that are suitable for apes and similar animals. For weapon skills they are limited to the simplest weapon skills and weapons, even a bow is too complex for these creatures. Though the barrier of language stands between a Yahoo and a human tutor the Yahoos' tendency to mimic (mockingly) could be of use

Here be Dragons...Dragons as PCs in AD&D

by Karl David Brown with Kylie Jakobsen.

Illustrations: Photography, painting and modification by Karl David Brown. Additional photography by Elizabeth Bowman. Miniatures: Iron Winds Tom Meier, Grenadier Julie Gutherie, Reaper Unknown. Further Illustrations: Gold Dragon: miniature Grenadier, image Campaign Game Miniatures.

This article began life as a scrap of paper crammed with scribbled notes and math that went on the ‘to do pile’ around about 1993. Around 2001 the first draft was typed up and became a house rule in a regular AD&D game. Here it was purified in the fires of play-testing until one day a low level dragon took on a low level dwarf. The combat lasted over 20 rounds and I knew then the rules were ripe. However, by then AD&D had vanished from the market and it seemed I had missed the tide of history.

How wrong I was. It’s 2010 and ‘old school’ gaming is a movement that is growing strong. While these rules were written with AD&D 2nd edition in mind they could be easily adaptable to OSRIC, Labyrinth Lord and other similar ‘old school’ games. Perhaps the best way to do this would be to start playing a dragon but accept that the referee has to right to prune and shape the rules for your character during play until the bumps encountered in adapting to the slightly different rules set are ironed out.

How can a game called Dungeons and Dragons not allow the latter as PCs? Well, given the limited scope of the numbers behind the game and the lowly nature of low-level characters a dragon is just too damn powerful. Numerous attempts to create dragon PC races, many of which are available on the net, have failed to deal with this imbalance of power. “The Council of Wryms”TM setting from TSR provided players with the opportunity to play dragons but within a specifically designed setting. The use of the dragon rules in “Council of Wryms”TM would result in imbalance in other settings.

Suppose though that an orphaned hatchling joined a party of adventurers for protection and slowly grew into the fire-breathing behemoth we know and love at the same pace that her more mundane companions climb from ambitious peasants to arch-magi and legendary hero-kings. Given that many of the dragon’s powers do not manifest until it is older, this scenario might just be workable and fair on the other players, or at least provide a framework for an NPC companion of the players. Herein is an attempt to put together a racial class that balances the powers of a dragon

against slow development and the social and physical inconvenience of being a fearsome creature. This article will also provide a detailed look at how the role would be an impediment in society.

This article was compiled primarily with reference to the “Player’s Handbook” TM, “Dungeon Master’s Guide” TM and “Monstrous Manual” TM. The “Complete Priest’s Handbook” TM and the “Complete Wizard’s Handbook” TM provided guidance on priest spheres and the effects of lightning underwater. The “Complete Book of Humanoids” TM provided examples of other unusual races acting as a guide in the design of this article. Some of the proficiencies used here appear in the above “Player’s Handbook” TM supplements. No dragon



specific AD&D products, such as the “Council of Wyrms” TM setting, have been consulted. Referees using other sources of draconic lore must look to their own resources to explain any inconsistencies.

Dragon Class

Dragons regard civilization as a foolish mortal creation. Since dragons are too avaricious and territorial to group together and organize their activities, there are no specialized roles or professions in dragon culture. When dragons are encountered in groups, it is always as a mated pair with young.

All dragons are of the same class and all dragons qualify for the class. This new class is designed to mimic the growth and development of dragons and is not available to other species. When created, dragons are limited in choice of alignments, each breed has three alignments chosen for it, for example, a copper dragon (CG by breed) may be CG, CN, or NG. The prime requisites for dragons are constitution and intelligence. All dragons must have at least 9 constitution and intelligence. Those with 16 or more in both earn a 10% bonus to experience; those with 16 or higher in only one of these attributes gain a 5% experience bonus. The maximum allowed level for a breed of dragon is the hit-die of a great wyrm. Many campaigns limit all characters to 20th level, if this is the case dragons may not exceed 20th level in those campaigns.

| Level | Standard xp. | Shape-Changing xp. |
|-------|--------------|--------------------|
| 1 | 0-5 699 | 0-5 999 |
| 2 | 5 700 | 6 000 |
| 3 | 11 200 | 12 000 |
| 4 | 22 400 | 24 000 |
| 5 | 56 000 | 60 000 |
| 6 | 112 000 | 120 000 |
| 7 | 224 000 | 240 000 |
| 8 | 420 000 | 450 000 |
| 9 | 784 000 | 840 000 |

Note that monster thac0 does not improve after 16th level and is 19 at first level.

The dragon uses monster Thac0, fighter saving throws, fighter strength and constitution bonus and a d8 for hit points every level until 9th level. After 9th level, a PC dragon gains 3hp per level and no bonus for high constitution. At higher levels, the dragon, like the Monster, can hit creatures usually only harmed by enchanted weapons. The class has a number of other abilities shared by all breeds of dragon but all breeds also have unique abilities detailed in the race descriptions.

The dragon class requires more experience points for advancement than any other class because of its power, particularly at higher levels. Typically, a dragon will be a level lower than other classes with the same amount of experience, placing them in the same league as pixies and firbolgs from the “Book of Humanoids”, or fighter/mages whom they resemble in abilities. The abilities specific to each breed were allowed for in formulation of the experience requirements. The dragon class has two experience point requirements: one for those who cannot assume humanoid forms and one for characters able to assume humanoid form and thus use equipment and move in society more freely. For characters that gain this ability at later levels, the character switches to the more expensive column for all levels after they gain this ability. Many breeds assume humanoid form via an innate *polymorph self* ability, though spells or other innate abilities may produce the same effect. Furthermore, many of the powers of dragons are partially balanced

by the need to assume natural form to use them. A dragon’s natural form draws unwanted attention and is physically inconvenient.

Class Individual XP Awards

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| Drive rival dragon from territory | +15xp/Hit Die |
| Dealing with non-dragon trespassers within lair | +10xp/Hit Die |
| Per gp worth of treasure obtained | +2xp |
| Racial power used to overcome foes or problems | +50xp |
| Spell used to overcome foes or problems | +25xp/spell level |

Ageing

Since dragons tend to rely more on their natural abilities rather than education or tools, dragon development is tied to growth. A dragon’s life is broken into age categories each covering a range of

levels. As a dragon ages more abilities are gained. The exact level at which a dragon gains these varies, as larger more powerful breeds require more levels to mature. Each of these abilities is tied to an 'age category'. A character must be of an appropriate age to advance to the next age category and although experience may be accumulated, no more levels will be awarded until the appropriate physiological age is acquired. Adventuring dragons may be avid seekers of magical effects that *cause* aging! Similarly magically reversing ageing may strip levels if one or more age categories are dropped, in such a case the dragon retains her experience and must only age to regain her original levels. A character that attains great age does not automatically attain higher levels. The character grows in size, and fear generation, strength, dexterity, and damage are as the new age, but the dragons lack of experience keeps its hit points and all other abilities at its earned level. Such a character may appear unskilled and under-confident under pressure.

To find the levels at which a new age category must be obtained before advancement is allowed apply the 'hit die modifier' from the monster manual, reproduced below, to the hit die of the breed listed in the "Monstrous Manual"™. For the breeds presented in this article this has already been calculated. The result is the last level in the current age category; any advancement after this requires that the character age to the starting age of the next age category first, also given below. A first level character is six months old. A hatchling dragon is more independent, competent, and less prone to fear, than the young of other races; dragons learn quickly and are born with the confidence of those at the top of the food chain. Dragons have no maximum age since they are immortal. Typically, dragons do not leave their parents until the young adult age category or juvenile at the earliest. Therefore, a first level character should include in their background the reason for their early separation from their parents. The effects of draconic aging common to all breeds are summarized in the following table.

| Age Category | Age (years) | 'Hit Die' Modifier | Fear Radius (yards) | Fear Save Modifier | Intelligence Bonus | Wisdom Bonus | Strength Bonus | Dexterity Penalty |
|----------------|-------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 1 Hatchling | 0-5 | -6 | Nil | Nil | | | * | |
| 2 Very Young | 6-15 | -4 | Nil | Nil | | | +1 | |
| 3 Young | 16-25 | -2 | Nil | Nil | | | +20%** | |
| 4 Juvenile | 26-50 | Nil | Nil | Nil | | | +20%** | |
| 5 Young Adult | 51-100 | +1 | 15 | +3 (+7) | | | +5%** | -1 |
| 6 Adult | 101-200 | +2 | 20 | +2 (+6) | | | +5%** | |
| 7 Mature Adult | 201-400 | +3 | 25 | +1 (+5) | +1 | +1 | +1 | -1 |
| 8 Old | 401-600 | +4 | 30 | +0 (+4) | | +1 | +1 | |
| 9 Very Old | 601-800 | +5 | 35 | -1 (+3) | | | +1 | |
| 10 Venerable | 801-1000 | +6 | 40 | -2 (+2) | +1 | +1 | +1 | -1 |
| 11 Wrym | 1001-1200 | +7 | 45 | -3 (+1) | | | +1 | |
| 12 Great Wrym | 1201+ | +8 | 50 | -4 (0) | | | +1 | |

*When a dragon reached both 7' and at least 1 year of age she becomes a size 'L' creature and strength is increased by +1. The age that this occurs is given in the breed's description.

** Apply to the % that follows an 18.

Example: Dranazel is a hatchling copper dragon, the base hit die of her breed is 13, the age modifier to hit die for hatchlings is -6 so Dranazel may advance unhindered until 7th level, but needs to be at least 5 years old before advancing to 8th level. Dranazel's player is ambitious and hopes to nurture her dragon to at least the 'mature adult' category, to do so Dranazel must reach 201 years of age and accumulate enough experience to advance to 16th level.

| Dragon non-weapon proficiencies | | Combat proficiencies |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Alertness 1 (Wis+1) | Hunting 1 (Wis-1) | Bite 1 |
| Ancient History 1 (Int-1) | Innate Abilities* 1 (NA) | Breath 1 |
| Animal Lore 1 (Int) | Languages, Ancient* 1 (Int-2) | Chew** 1 |
| Appraising 1 (Int) | Languages, Modern* 1 (Int) | Claw 1 |
| Astrology 2 (Int) | Local History 1 (Cha) | Dive 1 |
| Blind Fighting 2 (NA) | Navigation 1 (Int-2) | Kick 1 |
| Clairaudience with lair* 1 (NA) | Observation 1 (Int) | Plummet 1 |
| Communicate with Intelligent* 2 (NA) | Polymorph Self* 2 (NA) | Snatch*** 1 |
| Danger Sense 2 (Wis+1) | Reading/Writing* 1 (Int+1) | Tail Slap** 1 |
| Detect Invisible* 2 (NA) | Religion 1 (Wis) | Transfer*** 1 |
| Direction Sense 1 (Wis+1) | Riding Airborne* 2 (Wis) | Wing Buffet*** 1 |
| Endurance 2 (Con) | Singing 1 (Cha) | |
| Fast Talk | Spell Craft 1 (Int-2) | |
| Fire building 1 (Wis-1) | Stall* 1 (Str) | |
| Fly* 1 (Str) | Survival 2 (Int) | |
| Gaming 1 (Cha) | Swimming 1 (Str) | |
| Healing 2 (Wis-2) | Tracking 2 (Wis) | |
| Herbalism 2 (Int-2) | Traps* 1 (Dex-1) | |
| Hiding* 2 (Int-1-Age Category) | Weather Sense 1 (Wis-1) | |
| Jumping 1 (Str) | Wingover* 1 (Dex) | |

The adjustments to intelligence, wisdom, dexterity, are applied just like the aging effects of other races. Strength bonuses are like those of other races with two additional details. Firstly, a +1 is applied at the age when a typical hatchling of a breed reaches a body length of 7' or one year of age whichever occurs last. This age is given in the breed descriptions. Secondly, the % are applied to the % following an 18 in strength, the % bonuses are applied only to strengths of 18. If 18 is reached after age categories with a %, a cumulative % bonus is applied when the % is rolled. The bonus may not exceed 100% if it does so then the strength is raised to 19 and no further benefit is gained from % bonuses. The fear radius and save modifier are for the fear generation ability described later. The fear save modifiers in parenthesis are for gem dragon breeds.

Proficiencies

The proficiencies of the dragon begin with 2 combat and 4 non-weapon proficiencies chosen from the lists below, first level or non-*polymorphing* dragons may not choose from any other list including the 'General' list. Usually, the combat proficiencies granted at first level are spent on 'claw' and 'bite'; the combat slot gained at third is best spent on 'breath' ready for attaining the breath weapon at 5th level, these are, however, only suggestions. Dragons may not initially be proficient in ordinary weapons, 1st level combat proficiencies may only be spent on natural attacks and defenses. The dragon receives another slot in both combat and non-weapon proficiencies every level divisible by three. When using an attack, or weapon in humanoid form, without proficiency a non-proficiency penalty of -3 applies.

Dragons that gain the ability to assume human(oid) forms may learn normal weapon proficiencies instead of combat proficiencies but no initial combat slots may be spent this way. A dragon using human melee weapons only has one attack per round just like most other classes. *Polymorphing* dragons may also learn non-weapon proficiencies from other lists with the usual penalty for choosing outside class lists.

the Abilities section

Communicate with Intelligent: this proficiency is discussed in

Fly: this proficiency is discussed in the Abilities section

Hiding: is penalized by age category for dragons over 7' of body length to simulate the difficulty of concealing a large creature. In some circumstance the referee may waive this penalty. The regular penalty to this check based on the searcher's intelligence still applies (see "The Complete Book of Humanoids").

Innate Abilities typically require a proficiency slot each. Most are described in italics indicating the effects are identical to the spell of that name though no components are needed. Other innate abilities including immunities, dragon fear, and magic resistance do not need a proficiency to operate. While innate abilities are more powerful than other proficiencies, only one slot is required, unless noted separately, since the powers are often only useful in specific circumstances and are natural abilities developing with race and class that other character types get without expending slots.

*New non-weapon proficiencies or notes

**Adult and older dragons only

***Young adult and older dragons only

Languages: are limited by race. The languages available will be noted in the description of the dragon's breed. A dragon in its natural form with proficiency in a non-dragon language is able to speak that language but with a pronounced roaring draconic 'accent'. The 'communicate with any intelligent' power held by many dragons negates the need to learn mortal tongues.

Polymorph Self: not all breeds receive this innate ability but given its usefulness those who do must expend two slots to activate it and use the more expensive experience point table there after. More detail on this power is given in the Abilities section.

Read/write: claw runes are the written form of the dragon tongues. Claw runes are gouges and pits made upon a surface by a dragon's claws. A dragon in its natural form is unable to manipulate a quill and so cannot write non-dragon tongues without first *polymorphing* into another race.

Riding Airborne: the dragon knows the signals used to allow communication between mount and rider and can function in either capacity. A dragon must be at least of young adult age and have the 'fly' proficiency to carry a human sized rider aloft. A *polymorphed* dragon can ride other beasts.

Stall: is a special flight maneuver, a character must first have the proficiency 'flying' before learning this trick. A dragon flying low to the ground may halt its forward motion and hover for one round, once this round is over the dragon must then land. Not only does this allow a dragon to stop suddenly but also has benefit in combat. A hovering dragon can bite, use all of its claws, and kick attacks giving him five attacks. Alternatively, the breath weapon can be employed but since a breath can be discharged on the wing this carries little advantage. If the referee deems that the ground below the dragon has loose earth or that the surrounds are wooded then a cloud of dust and leaves with the same radius as the dragon's fear aura, if any, blinds creatures and prevents spell casting. The debris has these effects for one round.

Traps: This skill covers the construction of simple traps such as pits, cave-ins, and rockslides that can be constructed with the talons and strength of a dragon's natural form.

Wingover: A wingover maneuver allows a proficient dragon to perform a turn of 120-240° on a successful proficiency check regardless of its speed or size. On a failed check the dragon turns only to the limit of its maneuverability class and loses 100' of altitude, if at less than 1000' the dragon must land. A dragon may not gain altitude in the same round a wingover is performed.

Dragon Goods

Dragon forepaws are able to crudely grasp objects and point rods, wands, and similar items but detailed manipulation or coordination is beyond dragon talons. There are no dragon crossbows or even clubs, a dragon may hold a torch but is unable to light it with flint and tinder. A dragon can walk on two legs but finds bipedal posture uncomfortable, much

like a bear. A dragon on two legs' movement is at a rate as if she is one level of encumbrance higher than her actual load. A dragon in its natural form is unable to use weapons and armor of any kind. However, if able to assume a more human guise dragons may use any weapon and armor, but the restrictions on proficiencies limit a dragon's skill at arms.

The dragon may use magic items intended for wizards due to their cultural knowledge of magic and natural affinity for it. However, items that require manipulation beyond simple pointing and aiming require the dragon to *polymorph* out of its natural form.

Dragons in their natural form eat less than their size would tend to indicate and can gain some sustenance from vegetation, wood and minerals, such as gems, coal, mineral oils, metals, and ores, though hard items must be in swallow sized chunks. While in her natural form a dragon's 95% efficient metabolism requires only 10% of the dragon's weight in food a month, a dragon can space meals up to a month apart provided she eats sufficient bulk for every day of the month. Dragons that have the *polymorph self* or similar shape changing abilities eat fare of types and amounts appropriate to the shape they spent the most time in that day, even if they have already eaten their months supply in draconic form. The exception to this rule is steel dragons who eat as though they were in their natural form at all times.

Dragons with the *polymorph self* ability will find that gear worn or carried 'melds' into a new form when a change is affected. This gear will not be available until that form is again assumed. Note also that when a new shape is taken on appropriate gear is not created, only that which that shape was carrying last time it was assumed would be present, a 'brand new' shape is naked.

The dragon begins with d4x10gp with which to buy equipment and treasure. This amount is based on the minimal equipment needs of the character compared to the other classes, the same reasoning provides wizards with less starting funds than fighters.

Dragons in Combat

A dragon's defenses include an impressive natural armor class that improves with age. 'Old' or older dragons in their natural form are immune to normal missiles due to their thick and resilient hide. This protection extends to arrows, crossbow bolts and other hand held weapons but not burning oil, siege engines or missile weapons of huge or larger creatures. No proficiency slots are required to activate this ability. Dragons also have an innate magic resistance that for most breeds develops with age.

An attacking dragon can claw twice and bite once in a round on land or in the water. A flying dragon may claw twice or bite but not both, nor may they use wing buffets or tail slaps. Every breed has a base damage listed for claw and bite attacks to which any strength bonus is added. Strength bonuses replace the 'combat modifier' used in the "Monstrous Manual". When engaging other air-borne opponents the dragon may claw or bite but not both. Other combinations of physical attacks such as kicks are possible as detailed below. Any innate ability can be employed in the same round that physical attacks are made. If a dragon casts a spell then no other attack may be conducted, just as for human spell casters. The dragons breath weapon can only be used every third round, in a round that a breath weapon is used no other attacks, spells, or innate abilities may be employed. Dragon spells have a casting time of one and the speed of other dragon attacks is noted in the "Dungeon Master's Guide".

Descriptions of the various combat proficiencies follow but note that these attacks and maneuvers can be employed by those without proficiency but with the -3 non-proficiency penalty. Several attack forms are only available to older dragons and where applicable a minimum age is noted. Where no minimum age is noted even hatchlings may employ the attack.

Bite: attacks are allowed to targets on the front, back and sides because of a dragon's long flexible neck. When hatched until the age of two years the hatchlings bite inflicts only 1/3 of the number of dice damage (round off). At two years of

age and every year thereafter another die is added to the damage dealt until the full number of die for the breed is reached. For the breeds presented here the damage at various ages has been pre-calculated.

Chew: only dragons of young adult or older may employ this attack. Dragons must have the bite proficiency before learning this one. The dragon grabs an opponent with her mouth, treat as a bite attack but with -2 to hit (-5 total for the non-proficient) doing bite damage, if the attack is successful there is a 50% chance that a humanoid opponent's arms are pinned, and then in following rounds can automatically inflict bite damage. A dragon can chew creatures two or more size categories smaller than itself. The chew attack can be used to snatch opponents off the ground negating the need for a transfer as described below, to do this however requires a fly check. Failure of the fly check causes all attacks by the dragon in that round to fail and the dragon is forced to land. For those not also proficient in chew and snatch this use of chew is at -5 to hit. Note also that no more than one opponent may be snatched in a given round even with this ability.

Claw: attacks can be used on creatures to the front or sides. If a dragon kicks with a rear leg only one claw attack is allowed. A dragons claws do full damage from birth.

Dive: a diving dragon gains a +2 (total of -1 for the non-proficient) to hit rolls with his claws. In addition, when diving on land-bound opponents, a young adult or older dragon can also make two wing-buffet attacks but if they do so, they must land immediately after attacking

Kick: a dragon may substitute a kick to an opponent behind her in place of a claw attack to the front or sides. A kick does claw damage. Creatures kicked must roll their dexterity or less on a d20 or be knocked back d6+strength bonus to damage feet. Those knocked back must save vs. petrification, penalized by the dragon's age category, or fall prone. A dragon cannot tail slap while kicking and two kicks are not allowed, as a dragon must keep at least one rear and one fore foot down for balance while kicking.

Plummet: an airborne dragon, or one jumping down from at least 30', can land on a victim. The victim is pinned and crushed by the dragon's claws and tail for damage equal to a bite. A dragon can crush as many opponents as its age category number but must roll a separate attack against each one. Opponents that are missed are assumed to have escaped. In addition to the damage those hit must save vs. petrification, penalized by the dragon's age category number, or be pinned down. Pinned opponents can be automatically crushed for equivalent to bite damage again in the following rounds unless the dragon moves off them. Every round, an opponent may repeat the modified petrification save in an attempt to wiggle free.

Snatch: only dragons of young adult or older ages may use this maneuver. In a snatch, a flying dragon swoops and attempts to grab an opponent in one of its claws then take them aloft. If the attack is successful, there is a 50% chance that a humanoid opponents arms are pinned and the creature may be squeezed for automatic claw damage every following round. Dragons of young adult to mature adult can carry one snatched creature at a time. Dragons of age old or older may carry two snatched creatures. An airborne dragon can carry creatures two or more size categories smaller than himself. For example, a bronze young adult with a body length of 45' is a gargantuan creature so is able to snatch creatures of large or smaller size. Regardless of capacity, only one opponent can be snatched in a given round, and encumbrance still applies.

Stall: is not a combat proficiency but a non-weapon proficiency with uses in combat, it is mentioned here only for completeness.

Tail slap: grants extra attacks to dragons of age adult or older providing there are targets to the rear or sides. A tail slap affects as many targets as the dragon's age category number but a separate to hit roll must be made for each. Those hit suffer damage equivalent to two claw attacks and must save vs. petrification or be stunned for d4+1 rounds. A tail slap can also smash light wooden structures. Against a cube of force, a tail slap negates charges equal to half the age category number rounded down.

Transfer: a snatched opponent may be transferred to the mouth on a successful attack roll. Since snatching is a prerequisite, this maneuver can only be performed by young adult or older dragons. If the attack succeeds the dragon can chew, doing bite damage automatically each round. If the transfer fails, the creature is dropped. Wyrms and great wryms may carry three snatched creatures if one is transferred to the mouth before collecting the third.

Wing Buffet: grants dragons of young adult or older two extra attacks as long as opponents are to the sides of the beast. Dragons younger than young adult may not use wing buffets. The damage inflicted is the same as for a claw attack and the opponent must roll their dexterity or less on a d20 or be knocked down.

Dragon Abilities

Most of the abilities of a dragon require proficiencies to activate. Usually a non-weapon slot must be spent and the dragon must be of the correct age for the ability to be activated. Dragons may spend slots on abilities not yet available to their age category; though these are not activated though until the correct age is reached.

When using abilities with a radius of effect these are centered on the dragon's head.

Flight: Most dragon breeds can fly and dragon PCs are able to do so after spending a single proficiency slot on 'fly'. No roll is needed to fly but proficiency checks may be required by the DM in emergencies or rough weather (base check: Str). Since dragons must maintain at least half full speed to remain airborne, a dragon carrying more than moderate encumbrance is unable to fly. A dragon with the 'fly' proficiency may glide, traveling at half the movement of the previous round and losing 1000' of altitude. Gliding allows the dragon to concentrate on spell casting or similar activities. Further proficiencies are needed for special maneuvers or combat bonuses as described elsewhere. When climbing to gain altitude the dragon's speed is halved, but when diving movement is doubled. Common maneuvers are described as proficiencies in their own right.

Fear Generation: causes fear or panic in lesser creatures in the presence of a young adult or older dragon in its natural form. No proficiency slots are required to activate this ability. Creatures with less than one hit die, or level, as well as non-aggressive, non-carnivorous creatures with less hit die than the dragon has levels automatically flee in panic for 4d6 rounds.

Trained war mounts, military units, and single creatures with one or more hit dice but fewer hit die, or levels, than the dragon has levels do not panic but may be stricken with fear if within the radius of effect. The fear also affects those on the ground beneath a flying dragon at less than 250' altitude in a radius from a point on the ground below the dragon. A save is allowed vs. petrification, the saving throw adjustments for victims are given in the aging table, those who fail fight at -2 to hit and damage. The saving throw adjustment in parenthesis is for gem dragons. When the dragon is in its natural form the fear is always 'on' and cannot be turned off, a dragon is very frightening to weaker creatures. Creatures with equal or greater hit die, or levels, than the dragon has levels are immune to dragon fear.

Senses: Dragons have excellent senses of hearing, sight and smell. Dragons can detect invisible creatures and objects as well as those hidden by fogs, smokes, or darkness within 10' per age category. To gain the ability two proficiency slots must be expended. This ability provides no information on hidden or concealed doors, or objects, or on creatures hiding in shadows or using the hiding proficiency. The power is proof against that which cannot be seen, not against that which is out of sight. The ability is not proof against illusions. The detection ability can substitute for infra-vision in dark places but it must be remembered that its range is much less at low levels and that it also sees the invisible. A dragon also has a limited *clairaudience* ability that enables it to hear the 'goings on' in its lair provided it is within 20'/age category, this ability requires a single proficiency to activate. A lair is any room, building, or cave that has served as the dragon's permanent abode for at least three months. A dragon may only have one lair at a time.

Dragons detect noise as non-thieves at 20% as in the "Dungeon Master's Guide" (p125). Those with the tracking skill often gain information from the scent of their prey in addition to the usual visual clues but this carries no bonus to the

proficiency checks.

Communicate with Intelligent: Some dragon breeds are able to communicate telepathically with any intelligent creature. This ability requires two proficiency slots to activate and PC dragons are not required to roll the % given in the "Monstrous Manual"™ to acquire this ability. Although 'telepathic' the ability of *polymorphed* dragons to speak human languages and the dragon use of verbal spell components indicates an ability to speak unknown languages in *polymorphed* and perhaps dragon form. The few facts provided in the "Monstrous Manual"™ have been interpreted as follows. The ability is a kind of subconscious magical telepathic translator. When a dragon hears a language spoken or wishes to communicate with an intelligent creature the dragon is able to understand and frame a response using the creature's own proficiency. A creature must make a conscious effort to communicate with the dragon, or speak any language out-loud; a dragon cannot search a mind for thoughts nor can they use the ability to detect creatures that are hidden. The ability is useless against magic mouths, parrots, or other instances where a speaker has no understanding of what it is saying. The ability cannot be used with the read/write proficiency. The dragon may speak his reply out-loud or send it telepathically to *all* within earshot, useful for languages using color, unusual sounds, etc. The ability cannot send private messages. A dragon in her natural form has a roaring and sibilant accent.

Magic Resistance: is attained at the young adult age category for most breeds and improves slowly thereafter. It offers protection against spells and spell-like magical effects that work directly on the dragon (such as *forget* or *command word kill*) but no defense against spells and effects that indirectly affect the dragon (such as *fireballs*, *cloud kills* and *summoned* creatures). It is proof against spell-like innate powers but not gaze attacks, breath weapons, and other effects initiated differently to the 'concentration only' style of most innate powers. Since this power is always active a check must fail for beneficial spells and spell-like effects cast by others, such as *cure light wounds* or *bless*, to act on the dragon. No proficiency slot is required to activate this ability.

Polymorph self: allows the breeds that posses it to assume human(oid) form but more than that the shape of other creatures may be assumed. When utilizing this ability each form lasts until another is chosen and reverting to the

The following dragon abilities function when the dragon is *polymorphed*:

- Dragon spells if the character can speak
- Innate spells
- Dragon senses: detect invisible, clairaudience, and detect noise.
- Communicate with intelligent
- Magical resistance
- To hit as a magical weapon
- Immunities, for example the gold dragons immunity to gas and fire.

The following dragon abilities do not function when the dragon is *polymorphed*:

- Dragon hide AC
- Immunity to normal missiles
- Fear Generation
- Dragon movement except the wingless flight of gold dragons
- Breath weapons
- Dragon natural weapons

dragon's natural form does not count against the allowed number of changes in a day. The power however comes with the same limitations as the spell of the same name (other than duration): the character only gains the abilities inherent in the shape (no spells, breath weapons etc.) and can only assume the shape of a creature they have seen for themselves. The character cannot change into insubstantial creatures such as ghosts. The chosen form may be as small as a wren (about 3") to as large as a hippopotamus. A typical hippo is about 11½' long and weighs 3500 pounds, the largest are 15' long and weigh about 4500 pounds. An easy rule of thumb is creatures size L or smaller but larger than 2" are allowed. In addition dragons are limited to creatures of the same size category as themselves or smaller, a large (L) dragon could become a T, S, or M sized creature but not a L, H, or G sized one. This last restriction was added in this article in the interest of game balance. It prevents starting characters from changing into large powerful forms.

The *polymorphed* character gains the locomotion and breathing of the new form, its physical attacks, as well as AC if this is due to toughness rather than speed or magic. The dragon does not gain the senses of the new

form, for example assuming the form of an elf will not provide infravision, its knowledge, mental abilities, or magic. Strength will be sufficient to move the new form, assuming the form of a rabbit will result in low strength. For large strong creatures where strength is more than that of the dragon's natural form the referee may penalize dexterity and/or charisma to a total equal to the strength gained. The dragon maintains her own mental abilities, hit points and saving throws.

Breath Weapon: To attain the breath weapon the dragon must attain fifth level and have spent a combat proficiency on 'Breath'. For breeds with more than one type of breath weapon, such as the *repulsion gas* and *lightening bolt* of a bronze, a proficiency slot for every type of breath weapon is required. A dragon's breath becomes more potent as each new age category is reached. A dragon may use a breath weapon once every three rounds. Dragons with multiple types of breath weapons do not gain more frequent breaths but must choose which to use in any given three round period. A dragon may not activate innate powers, cast spells, or perform physical attacks in the same round that it employs a breath weapon. Where a breath weapon does damage a save for half damage applies.

Innate Powers: All dragon breeds have a few other innate powers specific to their type, often these abilities only manifest in later life or improve with age. 'Active' innate powers require a non-weapon proficiency slot to be spent on them before they can be used. Active powers are those that require a conscious decision or action for use, such as most spell-like powers. Passive powers do not require a proficiency slot. 'Passive' powers are usually immunities or other abilities that are automatically on. The calculation of the experience needed by the class has allowed for innate powers and details have been left for individual breed descriptions. A dragon can activate spell-like innate powers, but not cast spells, in the same round that he performs physical attacks such as claw or bite.

Spell Use: Dragons have a separate body of magical knowledge to the wizards of the other races. Dragons learn fewer spells than wizards but do not need the props of spell-books or material components. Regardless of the spell description, all dragon spells, wizard or priestly, require only a verbal component and concentration. Dragon spells also have a casting time of one regardless of the usual casting times. A dragon may not physically attack, use active innate powers, employ its breath weapon, or fly, but may glide, while casting a spell.

The spells allowed to a dragon per day are a function of age category. A dragon learns her first spells from her parents or by experimentation with her knowledge of magic when she first gains the ability to cast spells. The highly informal education in magic received by dragons results in their spells being selected at random. A generous DM may allow a dragon that has spent time in play with friendly NPC dragons to choose from spells known to these draconic friends. A dragon knows enough spells to cast a different spell for each spell slot, wizard or priestly, allowed to it, unless the same spell is rolled more than once, a dragon can cast each spell once per day. Unlike wizards and priests who can choose their spells each day, dragons receive the same spells every day, dragons cannot choose a different mix of the spells known to them. Each time a dragon spell caster gains a new age category new spells are learned. Since dragons do not learn spells from the same tradition as other spell casters, dragons may not learn new spells from scrolls or spell-books like wizards nor do they automatically begin with *read magic* or *detect magic*. The dragon casts spells at his level or the maximum casting level for his breed and age category, whichever is lower. The maximum casting level is the same as that given in the "Monstrous Manual" for a dragon of the age and breed. A 'base spell casting level' is added to the age category number to calculate the maximum casting level for any breed or age category. For example, the base spell level for a silver dragon is 6th so a juvenile (+4) silver dragon will cast spells at his own level or 10th level, whichever is lower. In this case juvenile silver dragons are 14-15th level so the casting level will be 10th. The maximum casting level, more limited number of spells per day, a fixed selection of spells each day, and the limited number of spells known makes dragons weaker spell casters than wizards or priests of the same level.

Dragon wizard spells are stored in an internal mental 'spell book' from which the dragon replenishes his spells each day. This internal spell book has proven to be immune to obliviax attacks and other effects that wipe spells wizards have memorized. As long as the dragon has had sufficient sleep, wizard spells are chosen and restored to active memory at the start of each day. A dragon cannot simply stop and study to restore spells when convenient, spells are

restored each morning and at no other time. A dragon may not cast spells directly out of the internal spell book, i.e. she cannot use it like a scroll.

For breeds that are able to cast priest spells, these are automatically granted, no time needs to be spent in devotion. A dragon's existence is its homage to its aloof gods instead, like wizard spells, they are restored each morning if the dragon has had sufficient sleep. Dragons choose the spheres they have access to upon reaching the level where they gain the ability to cast priest spells. A dragons priest spells are determined randomly from these spheres. Dragons have major access to 'All' and two other spheres of their choosing as well as minor access to two other spheres. Dragons cast priest spells at the same 'casting level' that they cast wizard spells.

The effects of intelligence and wisdom on wizard and priest spells respectively, apply to dragons.

| | | |
|-------|---------------|--|
| Level | equal to +... | <i>To Hit as a Magic Weapon:</i> allows higher-level dragons to use physical attacks against creatures that are normally only wounded by magical weapons. The ability allows dragons to hit these creatures as if they were using a weapon of the required '+' but does not actually add to 'to hit' or damage. This ability is the same as that used by creatures of the "Monstrous Manual" TM . Unlike the monster class, dragons do not receive this ability any earlier for having a high constitution. |
| 5 | +1 | |
| 7 | +2 | |
| 9 | +3 | |
| 11 | +4 | |

Dragons and Society

Dragons are unusual and fearsome creatures that are not likely to be reacted to in a friendly way by most. Fear and xenophobia will bar gates and doors to dragons in all but the most cosmopolitan cultures. Fortunately, among those of similar alignment the reputation of dragons will negate some of the negative reactions inspired by their size and appearance. Even so mortals may be stunned by awe and thus unable to react in a useful way. A known dragon has a -3 to her reaction modifier, for most encounters. In addition every breed has opposition alignments that react to dragons of the breed at -5 to the reaction modifier. Size M or smaller dragons are not as threatening and receive only a -1 reaction modifier, or -3 to those of opposition alignments. Despite these penalties, initially a dragon is small enough to enter buildings and dungeons easily, and interact meaningfully with other creatures. As the dragon grows, entry to society will have to be in *polymorphed* form if the dragon has an appropriate power. A dragon's fear generation also makes interactions with others tiresome at higher levels, unless a dragon can shed its natural form. It is also almost impossible to enter castles and fortified cities peaceably, in natural form, once a dragon acquires the mixed blessing of fear generation.

Young dragons, are also inexperienced in the ways of civilization and concepts such as the ownership of livestock or proper respect for authorities are unknown to them. These gaps in a hatchling's knowledge often cause disputes.

The dragon class does not attract followers. Young adult or older dragons may seek a mate and raise offspring but this should be handled through role-playing.

Finally, some very specific problems can plague a dragon that interacts with lesser creatures rather than living out his days in an isolated lair. The referee should endeavor to include at least one special encounter or plot line every level. Some examples are given but an inventive DM can 'flesh' these out or devise similar problems.

- Dragon hide is valuable as armor and other portions of dragon anatomy are useful as spell components or in the manufacture of magic items. Hunters may seek a dragon for profit.
- Potential heroes with a taste for fame can often make a name for themselves in dragon slaying.
- Lynch mobs are problematic encounters for lower level dragons without fear generation.
- Dragons make excellent aerial mounts and knights may pester the dragon to become a mount.
- Local rulers may try to enlist the dragon in petty human wars or schemes for oppression.
- Evil wizards may try to magically enslave dragons to further their own plans.
- Dragons themselves are territorial; entering another dragon's territory is very dangerous indeed.

- Most good and neutral dragons prefer to talk first and fight as a last option, notable exceptions being bronze dragons that have enlisted in a ‘just’ war, and steels in pursuit of violent criminals. If word of a youngster becoming a bully among mortals spreads a patronizing elder dragon may decide to ‘steer him back onto the right track’.
- Orphaned dragons of less than juvenile age may be ‘adopted’ by an adult. The new parent(s) will limit the player’s travel and activity to protect him. The player must ‘run away’.
- Dragons typically hoard treasure and burglars will be a reoccurring problem if the location of a lair becomes well known.

Dragon Personalities

Dragons present a distinct challenge to role-play well since they embody all the majesty, power, and mystery of a fantastic world. When well portrayed by a player or a referee more mundane characters should feel the echoes of magic and the ancient days of power in a dragon’s presence. There is more to a dragon than their fearsome physical form, when portraying a dragon remember she is a member of an elder and alien race born from an egg, raised outside of civilization, without need of weapons or tools (except to complete a disguise), or the company of her own kind. So how do you get a handle on such a role? One could consider draconic virtues, but consider also that every virtue has a vice as its shadow. Every breed, every individual has its own quirks of personality but the following pairs of virtues and vices provide a starting point for any draconic personality.

The awe dragons inspire in others has an internal equivalent in the soul of the dragon, the sense of **majesty**. The dragon knows he is a special creature capable and destined to do great things. They can speak with the sure oratory and presence that great rulers envy. They act with the sureness and sense of purpose of a force of nature. Unfortunately majesty is but a breath from vanity, when you are vested with greatness it is easy to consider deference your right and flattery an expected politeness. **Vanity** is a common

weakness in dragons lacking the wisdom to understand their place in the world, and many a wrym has fatally let her guard down before a silver tongue.

Unlike humans dragons do not congregate in numbers and, other than mated pairs and children, they live alone. Adult dragons do not need the company of their own kind or anyone else for survival or company, once grown they are capable predators with few natural enemies. Grown dragons simply do not get lonely. In some this **independence** leads them to think less of the sociable races. Civilization is considered to be a foolish mortal invention, or worse simply a haven for the weak. The feelings of those who consider the dragon a friend or ally may not be taken into account. A dragon may neglect a demihuman companion for decades only to show up again when the mortal’s skills are needed without as much as a “long time no see”. All of this cumulates in an **aloofness** from the concerns of mortals and mortal nations. Of coarse there are exceptions, particularly among the breeds detailed here. Gold and bronze dragons can become involved in thwarting the powerful forces of evil that beset mortals, silver dragons befriend those in need they happen across and sometimes seek the aid of great heroes. However, only steels tend to become involved in the everyday of mortal life but even then steels often come across as remote and patronizing.



Steels also exemplify the draconic virtue of **protectiveness**, watching over ‘their’ cities and the inhabitants. The steels devotion to the letter of the law makes their presence unwanted by some citizens. For most dragons protectiveness is simply an expression of the territorial instinct. A dragon watches over her lair, treasure, mate, children and allies. However, the **territorialism** itself is a vice. Dragons expel potential rivals from their territory, most often this means other dragons, but in some cases a dragon will regard powerful mortals as rivals. Evil dragons in particular will hunt down and kill trespassers. The territorialism of dragons prevents them from cooperating and in older dragons often drives them to expel even their mates.

Dragons appreciate fine things. According to taste a wrym may find inspiration in jewels, majestic landscapes, and the bravery of heroes, paintings, and sculpture or epic sagas. **Appreciation** is one thing, but this has grown in most dragons into the desire to possess. Some things of beauty, like the stars, cannot be possessed but those that can are found in a dragon’s horde somewhere. Most commonly jewels and objects of precious metals are horded, but dragon **avarice** can find expression in anything of beauty. Steels for example may have libraries of rare literature or galleries of fine paintings. For a dragon there is never enough treasure and avarice is the vice that even the noblest wyrms possess in abundance.

Dragons hold that they are the most ancient of the world’s peoples and surely they possess lore beyond mortal ken. Noble dragons seek to keep ancient and dangerous knowledge out of the claws of mortals. The arcane secrets of dragons, such as the location of ancient artifacts, could be used by mortals to inflict terrible destruction. In the present dragons keep watch over their territories and the world, moving through mortal society in *polymorphed* form. The **mystery** of dragon lore, motivations, and even presence works to increase the awe others feel for dragons, but all too easily mystery becomes merely **secrecy**. Who can trust a creature that keeps her lair, plans, useful lore, and even her true nature secret? A strong tendency for secrecy, sometimes for no good reason, is a character flaw in many dragons, particularly those living disguise among mortals who can develop a siege mentality.

As a starting point for defining the personality consider not only his unusual background but also which of the virtues and vices is dominant in the character and the habits through which each is expressed. On the whole good aligned dragons favor virtues over vices and evil dragons the opposite. However, there are few good wyrms without at least one vice, and even the foulest wrym can have some virtue, consider the majesty of a great green commanding its servants or the fierce protectiveness of a red dragon for its hatchlings.

Breeds

Although almost any breed of dragon could be defined as a PC or NPC with the dragon class four seem more likely to wind up accompanying a band of adventurers, the bronze, gold, and silver breeds. All are non-evil.

Bronze dragons are curious creatures and following this curiosity could lead them to adventure. Bronze dragons are also fascinated by warfare and will join armies if the pay is good and the cause just. A bronze dragon’s hatred of pirates may cause him to aid local navies. Mature bronze dragons often assume the form of a small animal to watch other races unobtrusively. However, unless players of other breeds choose not to spend proficiencies on *polymorph self*, of the breeds presented here only the bronze cannot assume a humanoid form at low levels. Bronzes are therefore perfect for players wanting to immerse themselves in the role of a dragon, and not that of a dragon masquerading as a human.

Gold dragons have an overdeveloped sense of justice that leads them into self-appointed quests. A young gold may seek aid on her quest. Typically, a questing gold will be disguised as a human or animal, if it has this ability. A gold dragon’s quest will often be compromised if its identity is discovered. Rumors of dragon sightings spread rapidly and enemies will soon hear of a dragon afoot.

Silver dragons will lend assistance to creatures in genuine need and this often leads them into adventure. Silver dragons seem to prefer the human form to their own and often have human and demi-human companions. After living for a time among mortals, a silver dragon will eventually tire of the mortal world, reveal itself and go to live as a

dragon for a time.

Ability Scores

Several guidelines were used to assign the adjustments, minimums and maximums, to dragon breed ability scores.

Firstly, all dragons have at least +2 to Constitution reflecting their inherently magical and robust metabolism, dragons

can gain some sustenance from minerals and are notoriously hard to kill. Secondly, the intelligence bonus was based on the monster version's intelligence, exceptional or genius +1, supra-genius +2, godlike +3. All dragons have minimum scores of at least 10 in strength, and 9 in both constitution and intelligence. A typical hatchling has strength of 16 or 17 on hatching, accounting for the modifier to damage in the "Monstrous Manual", but PC's may be runts. The

total of +'s and -'s equals zero at first level. To satisfy this requirement most have penalties to dexterity and charisma. Charisma penalties reflect the solitary, avaricious, territorial, and arrogant tendencies of most dragons. These same characteristics also prevent wisdom bonuses in all but the wisest breeds, such as gold and gem dragons. Dexterity penalties are attributed to the clumsiness of young growing bodies and to a dragon's bulk.

Ageing

Dragons grow enormously in size. At first level, 6 months, all the breeds presented here except the steel are M sized. Steel dragons who begin as T sized creatures grow to S by their first year and to M by their second. Later progressions in size are given in the tables below. Strength begins unmodified but increases as the dragon grows. When a dragon's body length reaches around 7' and at least one year of age strength bonus is awarded. This +1 is awarded at one year of age for all of the breeds presented here except steel dragons that gain the bonus at 5 years of age. All the bonuses are cumulative.

It is assumed that a dragon grows at an even rate within each age category progressing from the smallest length for that breed and category to the longest. Dragons of great wrym status reach their maximum size at 1400 years of age. To allow for variation roll 2d10-2d10, for a percentage (-18% to +18%) an individual is larger or smaller than typical, record this percentage and continue to apply it as the character grows with age. According to the "Monstrous Manual™" dragon wingspan is equal to body length and about 15-20% of body length is neck. However, these proportions produce dragons that do not match our ideas of draconic beauty, as gleaned from modern illustrators. Suggested alternative proportions are wingspan equal to double body length and 30-35% of body length as neck.

The mass of a dragon is determined in two stages, firstly, add the body and tail length together then cube the result, divide this by two. For example, a hatchling bronze might be 5'6" + 3'4" of tail equals 8' 10" or 8.8', cube 8.8x8.8x8.8 = 681, divide by 2 = 341 pounds. Note to convert inches to a decimal of feet divide by 12. You now have the typical mass for a dragon of that length. Now roll 3d10-3d10 to produce a percentage (range -27% to +27%) and apply this to the base mass. Take care to record this percentage for when the character grows. For example the player of the bronze dragon above rolls 8+5+2 then -3-7-8, the total is -3%. The character is a little slight but not too much 341-3% = 331 pounds.

Tables of size, age, and related abilities taken from the "Monstrous Manual" are given below for each breed. The spells given below are noted as numbers of spells in each spell level for wizard then priest spells, after a '/'. For example 2 2 1 / 1 means the dragon has the following wizard spells: two of both first and second level spells and one third level as

well as one first level priest spell. Though related to age bite damage increases within the 'Hatchling' age category and so for clarity its progress is given within the breed descriptions.

Alignments

The allowed alignments for new dragon characters and the opposing alignments of each breed (in parenthesis) are given below.

Bronze: NG, LG, CG, (NE, CE, LE)

Gold: LG, NG, CG (NE, CE, LE)

Silver: LG, NG, CG (NE, CE, LE)

Abilities and Descriptions

Every breed gains different abilities and these are acquired at different levels. The abilities of the various breeds covered here are listed below by breed, level, and age category. The breeds' interactions with civilization have already been discussed but other details are noted below. Where an * occurs the power does not require a proficiency slot to activate.

Bronze

Move: 9, Sw 12, Fl 30(C)

Base Hit Die: 14

Base Damage: Bite 4d6 Claw d8

Base Spell Casting Level: 8th

Languages: Bronze Dragon, Good Dragon.

Bite damage: initial d6, 2yrs 2d6, 3yrs 3d6, 4yrs and over 4d6

Hatchling 1st level: communicate with intelligent and both *water breathing* and *speak with animals* at will. Immune to electricity*. Free swimming proficiency*.

Hatchling 5th level: Breath weapons; *lightning* bolt 5' wide and 100' long and *repulsion* gas 20' wide 30' high and 30'long. Underwater the breath manifests as a sphere of 20' radius with the dragon's mouth on the edge of the sphere doing the same damage as a bolt to all within the sphere. Above or below the surface those struck by lightening may save vs. breath weapon for half damage. The *repulsion* gas does no damage but those failing a save vs. breath weapon must flee for 2 minutes for every age category of the dragon plus d6 minutes.

Young 11th level: *create food and water* and *polymorph self* both three times per day.

Juvenile 13th level: *wall of fog* once per day.

Adult 16th: *ESP* three times a day.

Mature Adult: 17th level: *airy water* three times per day with a 10' radius per age category

Old 18th level: *weather summoning* once a day

Description: Bronze dragons are a medium size and power breed. Coloration is yellow tinged with green on hatching but this slowly deepens to a rich bronze as the dragon ages. Very old and older dragons develop a blue-black tint to their scales like the patina on old bronze armor.

Bronze dragons typically lair near deep water, fresh or salt, and are good swimmers. Bronze dragon lairs ideally are accessible only from the water but the lair itself is dry, bronzes sleep and lay eggs in air.

Bronze dragons are on good terms with sea mammals particularly whales and dolphins. Bronzes are curious about civilization and this draws them into interactions with other races. However this curiosity is not enough to persuade them to live within cities as do steels. Bronze dragons dislike pirates and evil amphibious creatures. As well as being curious about mortals, bronze dragons avoid killing creatures of animal intelligence though they enjoy shark meat.

Other items in the bronze dragon diet include aquatic plants and some seafood. Like other dragons, bronze dragons can digest just about anything in a pinch; they enjoy an occasional pearl as a snack.

| Age | Levels | Body Lgt. (') | Tail Lgt. (') | AC | Breath Weapon | Spells Wizard/Priest | MR |
|--------------|--------|------------------|------------------|----|------------------|----------------------|-----|
| 1 Hatchling | 1-8 | 5-14 | 3-10 | 1 | 2d8+1 | Nil | Nil |
| 2 Very Young | 9-10 | 14-23 | 10-19 | 0 | 4d8+2 | Nil | Nil |

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------|-------|---------|---------|-----|---------|-------------------|-----|
| 3 Young | 11-12 | 23-32 | 19-28 | -1 | 6d8+3 | Nil | Nil |
| 4 Juvenile | 13-14 | 32-42 | 28-37 | -2 | 8d8+4 | 1 | Nil |
| 5 Young Adult | 15 | 42-52 | 37-44 | -3 | 10d8+5 | 1 1 | 20% |
| 6 Adult | 16 | 52-63 | 44-52 | -4 | 12d8+6 | 2 1 | 25% |
| 7 Mature Adult | 17 | 63-74 | 52-60 | -5 | 14d8+7 | 2 2 | 30% |
| 8 Old | 18 | 74-85 | 60-70 | -6 | 16d8+8 | 2 2 1 / 1 | 35% |
| 9 Very Old | 19 | 85-96- | 70-80 | -7 | 18d8+9 | 2 2 2 / 1 1 | 40% |
| 10 Venerable | 20 | 96-108 | 80-90 | -8 | 20d8+10 | 2 2 2 1 / 2 1 | 45% |
| 11 Wyrm | 21 | 108-120 | 90-100 | -9 | 22d8+11 | 2 2 2 2 / 2 2 | 50% |
| 12 Great Wyrm | 22 | 120-134 | 100-110 | -10 | 24d8+12 | 2 2 2 2 1 / 2 2 1 | 55% |

Gold

Move: Winged: 12, Sw 12, Jp 3, Fl 40(C). Wingless: 12, Sw 15, Jp 3, Fl 6 (E)

Base Hit Die: 16

Base Damage: Bite 6d6 Claw d10

Base Spell Casting Level: 11th

Languages: Gold Dragon, Good Dragon.

Bite damage: initial 2d6, 2yrs 3d6, 3yrs 4d6, 4yrs 5d6, 5yrs and over 6d6

Hatchling 1st level: communicate with intelligent and both *water breathing* and *speak with animals* at will. *Polymorph self* three times a day. A gold dragon with the flying proficiency can fly at 6 (E) in *any* wingless shape if a second proficiency slot is spent on flight. Immune to fire* and gas*. Free swimming proficiency*.

Hatchling 5th level: Breath weapons, cone of fire 5' wide at the mouth, 30' wide at the far end and 90' long and cloud of chlorine gas 40' wide 30' high and 50'long. Both do the same damage and allow a save for half damage.

Young 13th level: *bless* three times per day.

Juvenile 15th level: *detect lie* three times per day.

Adult 18th level: *animal summoning* once per day.

Mature Adult: 19th level: *luck bonus* once per day. The luck bonus is used to enchant one gem, usually one embedded in the dragon's hide, and provides a +1 (or 5% where applicable) bonus to the saving throws, and similar rolls to avoid misfortune, of every good creature within a radius of 10' per age category. The stone does not affect 'to hit' rolls, damage rolls, or spell failure dice. A dragon may give the gem to another, in this case only the bearer receives the bonus and then only if they are of good alignment. The duration of the power is three hours per age category plus 1-3 hours. The exact duration is unknown to players and the effect ends if the gem is destroyed before the duration expires.

Old 20th: *quest* once a day and *detect gems* three times a day, the latter allows a dragon to know the number and kind of precious stones within a 30' radius, the effect lasts one minute.

Description: Gold dragons are the most powerful of the metallic breeds but require great amounts of experience to develop their potential. Gold dragons are a large breed with long serpentine tails. Gold dragons are dark yellow with golden flecks on hatching. The gold flecks spread until, at the adult stage, the dragon is golden. Gold dragons are naturally winged but those who have mastered *polymorph self* may also assume a wingless draconic form that is better for swimming but is a poor flyer. Since this wingless form is not the dragon's natural form assuming it counts against the three *polymorphs* allowed to a gold dragon each day.

Gold dragons, unlike other breeds, have basic understanding of the methodology of mortal spell casters. Upon gaining the ability to cast spells a gold that is also able to *polymorph* can put together a spell book with an additional spell, *read magic*, and may also transcribe spells from his internal book into this physical book. A gold dragon may seek out new spells to learn and copy into its book just like a bard. Reading and writing into a spell book requires the dragon to be

polymorphed into a mortal form since dragon talons are incapable of fine manipulation. A dragon may choose to replenish spent wizard spells from his spells allowed for a day with spells from this physical book, to do so however the dragon must study just like a wizard before sleeping automatically refills these slots with the dragon's default spells. Note that when a dragon casts spells recorded in the physical book they still have a casting time of one and require only a verbal component, just like other dragon spells. However, if a mortal spell caster learns a spell from a dragon's book the usual time and components are required. Dragons are inherently magical creatures whose nature compensates for the lack of props.

Gold dragons are adaptable and can lair in any terrain. Gold dragon's lairs are always stone, either caves or castles. Gold dragons have a well-deserved reputation for wisdom and benevolence. Dragons often recruit animals that co-inhabit the lair and many live with storm and cloud giants for mutual defense. Giants are the most likely builders of a dragon castle lair. As well as their interactions with powerful good giants, a gold dragon's unwavering defense of justice can bring them into contact with other races. Typically, such interactions are conducted in disguise as a human or animal. Gold dragons are fond of gifts but not of bribes. Gold dragons can eat just about anything but enjoy pearls and gems as food.

| Age | Levels | Body Lgt. (') | Tail Lgt. (') | AC | Breath Weapon | Spells Wizard/Priest | MR |
|----------------|--------|------------------|------------------|-----|------------------|---------------------------|-----|
| 1 Hatchling | 1-10 | 7-19 | 6-16 | -1 | 2d12+1 | Nil | Nil |
| 2 Very Young | 11-12 | 19-31 | 16-28 | -2 | 4d12+2 | Nil | Nil |
| 3 Young | 13-14 | 31-43 | 28-38 | -3 | 6d12+3 | Nil | Nil |
| 4 Juvenile | 15-16 | 43-55 | 38-50 | -4 | 8d12+4 | 1 | Nil |
| 5 Young Adult | 17 | 55-67 | 50-60 | -5 | 10d12+5 | 2 | 35% |
| 6 Adult | 18 | 67-80 | 60-70 | -6 | 12d12+6 | 2 2 | 40% |
| 7 Mature Adult | 19 | 80-93 | 70-84 | -7 | 14d12+7 | 2 2 2 | 45% |
| 8 Old | 20 | 93-106 | 84-95 | -8 | 16d12+8 | 2 2 2 2 / 1 | 50% |
| 9 Very Old | 21 | 106-120 | 95-108 | -9 | 18d12+9 | 2 2 2 2 2 / 2 | 55% |
| 10 Venerable | 22 | 120-134 | 108-120 | -10 | 20d12+10 | 2 2 2 2 2 2 / 2 2 | 60% |
| 11 Wyrm | 23 | 134-148 | 121-133 | -11 | 22d12+11 | 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 / 2 2 2 | 65% |
| 12 Great Wyrm | 24 | 148-162 | 133-146 | -12 | 24d12+12 | 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 1 / 2 2 2 2 | 70% |

Silver

Move: 9, Jp 3, Fl 30(C).

Base Hit Die: 15

Base Damage: Bite 5d6 Claw d8

Base Spell Casting Level: 6th

Languages: Silver Dragon, Good Dragon.

Bite damage: initial 2d6, 2yrs 3d6, 3yrs 4d6, 4yrs and over 5d6

Hatchling 1st level: communicate with intelligent and *cloud walk* at will. *Polymorph self* three times a day. Immune to cold*.

Hatchling 5th level: Breath weapons; cone of cold 5' wide at the mouth, 30' wide at the far end and 80' long, and cloud of paralyzing gas 40' wide 20' high and 50'long. The cold breath allows a save for half damage. The paralyzation gas requires victims to save vs. breath weapon or be paralyzed for one minute per age category of the dragon plus d8 minutes.

Young 12th level: *feather fall* twice per day.

Juvenile 14th level: *Wall of fog* once times per day.

Adult 17th level: *control winds* thrice per day.

Mature Adult: 18th: *control weather* once per day.

Old 19th level: *reverse gravity* once per day.

Description: Of the metallic breeds, silver dragons are second only to gold dragons in size and power. Silver dragons lack the long tails of gold dragons. Silver dragons are blue-gray with silver highlights when hatched but brighten to gleaming silver as the dragon ages. Adults have small scales giving the impression that they have been sculpted from metal.

Silver dragons are found in most climes but artic or sub-artic and lair among mountain peaks or on solid clouds like those favored by cloud giants. The origin of these unusual clouds is a mystery for the referee to determine but are not of the dragon's making.

| Age | Levels | Body Lgt. ([‘]) | Tail Lgt. ([‘]) | AC | Breath Weapon | Spells Wizard/Priest | MR |
|----------------|--------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----|---------------|-----------------------|--------|
| 1 Hatchling | 1-9 | 8-18 | 3-6 | 0 | 2d10+1 | Nil | Nil |
| 2 Very Young | 10-11 | 18-30 | 6-12 | -1 | 4d10+2 | Nil | Nil |
| 3 Young | 12-13 | 30-42 | 12-16 | -2 | 6d10+3 | Nil | Nil |
| 4 Juvenile | 14-15 | 42-52 | 16-21 | -3 | 8d10+4 | 2 | Nil |
| 5 Young Adult | 16 | 52-63 | 21-27 | -4 | 10d10+5 | 2 2 | 25% |
| 6 Adult | 17 | 63-74 | 27-32 | -5 | 12d10+6 | 2 2 1 | 30% |
| 7 Mature Adult | 18 | 74-85 | 32-37 | -6 | 14d10+7 | 2 2 2 | 35% |
| 8 Old | 19 | 85-96 | 37-43 | -7 | 16d10+8 | 2 2 2 1 / 2 | 40% |
| 9 Very Old | 20 | 96-108 | 43-48 | -8 | 18d10+9 | 2 2 2 2 / 2 2 | 45% |
| 10 Venerable | 22 | 108-120 | 48-54 | -9 | 20d10+10 | 2 2 2 2 1 / 2 2 1 | 50% |
| 11 Wyrm | 23 | 120-134 | 54-60 | -10 | 22d10+11 | 2 2 2 2 2 / 2 2 2 | 55% |
| 12 Great Wyrm | 24 | 134-148 | 60-67 | -11 | 24d10+12 | 2 2 2 2 2 1 / 2 2 2 1 | 60.00% |

While silver dragons are fond of mortals, and prefer to avoid combat, they have no patience for evil dragons, particularly red dragons that also lair in mountainous terrain. Silver dragons have been known to co-operate and even seek aid from hero companions of mortal races in battles with red dragons. Silver dragons prefer human food, a preference that is ideal for extended disguised journeys among mortals.

Last Breath

These rules are intended to provide players and referees alike with rules for creating dragon characters and letting them grow in power alongside mortal companions without unbalancing play. The rules work best in campaigns where the passage of time is carefully monitored and game time passes at a moderate pace. Campaigns in which characters spend time traveling, researching, working day jobs, constructing fortresses, and other time consuming activities are perfect.

The class presented here provides for most of the abilities shared by dragons and provides a framework that allows individual dragons to develop unique combinations of powers and skills, just as no two elves are alike neither should any two dragons be.

The breeds presented here are those most likely to involve themselves with mortals. These four provide very different roles and opportunities ranging from social yet secretive steels to the undisguised sea loving bronze. The breeds presented here could also act as templates for writing the rules for less social breeds as PCs or perhaps only NPCs.

The article also is brimming over with ‘hooks’ for adventures and encounters involving dragons as PCs, companions, or foes. With this article as a guide, integrating these fabulous beasts into most campaigns should be smooth and easy.

The Sentient Species Generator for Dr. Who

by Peter Cobcroft

The Sentient Species Generator does as the name implies, creating all the statistical information from Doctor Who: Adventures in Time and Space roleplaying game supplement, Aliens and Enemies by Cubicle 7 (see RPG Review #8 for a review of this game). The following code is designed to run on any webserver that accepts PHP; typically you'll want to this a LAMP (Linux/Apache/MySQL/PHP) stack. If you do not have access or the inclination to set up a webserver you can simply use the pre-established code from the following URL :

<http://www.matrix.curufea.com/node/328>

```
<?php
echo "<p>Code written by <strong>Curufea</strong></p>";
echo "<p>Hit 'refresh' to generate a new result</p>";
//Random Species Generator
//Generic Version

//1. Basic Form of Species:
$numForm = mt_rand(1,6)+mt_rand(1,6)+mt_rand(1,6); // simulating 3D6// Array is - Limbs, Head, Tail, Other, Sight, Smell, Hearing, Taste, Other
switch($numForm ){

case 3: $form = "Text description of form";
$traits = "list of traits";
break;

case ($numForm==4 || $numForm==5) : $form = "Text description of
form";
$traits = "list of traits";
break;

case ($numForm==6 || $numForm==7): $form = "Text description of
form";
$traits = "list of traits";
break;

case ($numForm==8 || $numForm==9): $form = "Text description of
form";
$traits = "list of traits";
break;

case ($numForm==10 || $numForm==11): $form = "Text description of
form";
$traits = "list of traits";
break;

case ($numForm==12 || $numForm==13): $form = "Text description of
form";
$traits = "list of traits";
break;

case ($numForm==14 || $numForm==15): $form = "Text description of
form";
$traits = "list of traits";
break;

case ($numForm==16 || $numForm==17): $form = "Text description of
form";
$traits = "list of traits";
break;

case 18: $form = "Text description of form";
$traits = "list of traits";
break;
};

//2. Physical Details:
// Appendages and Senses
$PhysicalDetails = array();
$PhysicalDescription = array ("Arms and
Legs:", "Heads:", "Tails:", "Unusual Appendages:", "Sight:", "Smell:", "Hearing:", "Taste:", "Unusual Senses:");
$PhysicalResults = array(
2=>array("# limbs", "# heads", "# tails", "# unusual", "sight mod", "smell
mod", "hearing mod", "taste mod", "unusual mod"),
3=>array("# limbs", "# heads", "# tails", "# unusual", "sight mod", "smell
mod", "hearing mod", "taste mod", "unusual mod"),
4=>array("# limbs", "# heads", "# tails", "# unusual", "sight mod", "smell
mod", "hearing mod", "taste mod", "unusual mod"),
5=>array("# limbs", "# heads", "# tails", "# unusual", "sight mod", "smell
mod", "hearing mod", "taste mod", "unusual mod"),
6=>array("# limbs", "# heads", "# tails", "# unusual", "sight mod", "smell
mod", "hearing mod", "taste mod", "unusual mod"),
7=>array("# limbs", "# heads", "# tails", "# unusual", "sight mod", "smell
mod", "hearing mod", "taste mod", "unusual mod"),
8=>array("# limbs", "# heads", "# tails", "# unusual", "sight mod", "smell
mod", "hearing mod", "taste mod", "unusual mod"),
9=>array("# limbs", "# heads", "# tails", "# unusual", "sight mod", "smell
mod", "hearing mod", "taste mod", "unusual mod"),
10=>array("# limbs", "# heads", "# tails", "# unusual", "sight mod", "smell
mod", "hearing mod", "taste mod", "unusual mod"),
11=>array("# limbs", "# heads", "# tails", "# unusual", "sight mod", "smell
mod", "hearing mod", "taste mod", "unusual mod"),
12=>array("# limbs", "# heads", "# tails", "# unusual", "sight mod", "smell
mod", "hearing mod", "taste mod", "unusual mod")
);
// Note - for any of the results (such as "# limbs) you can use a PHP
function instead [e.g. put in a random number such as mt_rand(1,6)] for ($counter=0;$counter<10;$counter++) {
$numDetails = mt_rand(1,6)+mt_rand(1,6); // simulate 2D6
$PhysicalDetails[$counter]=$PhysicalResults[$numDetails][$counter];
};

//3. Tech Level:
$TechLevel = mt_rand(1,6)+mt_rand(0,5); // or whatever you need to
simulate techlevel
//4. Civilisation:
$CivType = mt_rand(0,5)+mt_rand(0,5)+mt_rand(0,5)+
```

```

((TechLevel>5)*1); // generate civ type modified by tech level
$civResults = array("Civ type", "Civ type", "Civ type", "Civ type", "Civ
type", "Civ type", "Civ type", "Civ type", "Civ type", "Civ type", "Civ
type", "ICiv type", "Civ type", "Civ type", "Civ type", "Civ type", "Civ
type");
if ($civType>9){
if ($civType>11){
if ($civType>13){

if (mt_rand(1,2)==1) {
$civExtras = "Extra notes on a variant for this Civ type";
} else {
$civExtras = "Extra notes on a variant for this Civ type";
};
} else {
switch (mt_rand(1,3)) {

Case 1:
$civExtras = "Extra notes on a variant for this Civ type";
break;

Case 2:
$civExtras = "Extra notes on a variant for this Civ type";
break;

Case 3:
$civExtras = "Extra notes on a variant for this Civ type";
break;
};

};

} else {
$numColonies = mt_rand(1,3);

if ($numColonies>1) {
$civExtras = "Has colonised ".$numColonies." planets in this system.";
} else {
$civExtras = "Has colonised ".$numColonies." planet in this system.";
};
$ind=0;
for ($counter=0;$counter<$numColonies;$counter++) {
if (mt_rand(1,3)==3) {
$ind++;
};
};
if ($ind>0) {

if ($numColonies>1) {
$civExtras .= " ".$ind." of these colonies is independent.";
} else {
$civExtras .= " This colony is independent.";
};
};

};

};

};

//5. Attributes and Skills
$attSkillDesc = array("Attribute", "Attribute", "Attribute", "Attribute",
"Attribute", "Attribute", "Physical or Combat Skill", "Academic Skill",
"Tech Skill", "Physical or Combat Skill", "Academic Skill", "Physical or
Combat Skill", "Tech Skill", "Academic Skill", "Physical or Combat Skill",

"Physical or Combat Skill", "Tech Skill", "Tech Skill");
$physComSkills = array(6,9,11,14,15); // used to allocate skill points from
a random sized pool
$techSkills = array(8,12,16,17); // used to allocate skill points from a
random sized pool
$acadSkills = array(7,10,13); // used to allocate skill points from a
random sized pool
//Process starting skills
for ($counter=0;$counter<count($attSkillDesc);$counter++) {
if ($counter<6) {
$attSkillStats[$counter]=mt_rand(1,6); // Starting attributes are random
between 1 and 6
} else {
$attSkillStats[$counter]=0; // Starting skills are zero
};
};

//Physical and Combat skills
$combatTotal= mt_rand(0,5)+mt_rand(0,5); // Size of the pool to allocate
points from
for ($counter=0;$counter<=$combatTotal;$counter++) {
$attSkillStats[$physComSkills[mt_rand(0,count($physComSkills))]]+=
1; // Increment one of the skills in the category by one
};

//Technical skills
$techTotal= $TechLevel-mt_rand(1,6); // Size of the pool to allocate
points from
for ($counter=0;$counter<=$techTotal;$counter++) {
$attSkillStats[$techSkills[mt_rand(0,count($techSkills))]]++; // Increment
one of the skills in the category by one
};

//Academic Skills
$acadTotal= $TechLevel-mt_rand(1,6); // Size of the pool to allocate
points from
for ($counter=0;$counter<=$acadTotal;$counter++) {
$attSkillStats[$acadSkills[mt_rand(0,count($acadSkills))]]++; // Increment
one of the skills in the category by one
};

if ($TechLevel>4) {
$attSkillStats[2]++; // Increment one of the skills if the civilisations
techlevel is high enough
};
if ($TechLevel>7) {
$attSkillStats[2]++; // Increment one of the skills if the civilisations
techlevel is high enough
};
if ($TechLevel>10) {
$attSkillStats[2]++; // Increment one of the skills if the civilisations
techlevel is high enough
};

//6. Species Aggression
$numAggression = (mt_rand(1,6)+mt_rand(1,6)); // 2D6
$peaceSkills = array (7,8,10,12,13,16,17); // A category of skills for the
less aggressive

if ($numAggression==2) {
$specAggression = "Aggression type";
$attSkillStats[9]=mt_rand(1,3); // Modify skills
$attSkillStats[11]=mt_rand(1,3);
} else {
if ($numAggression<6) {
$specAggression = "Aggression type";
$attSkillStats[mt_rand(6,17)]=1;
}
}

```

```

if (mt_rand(1,2)==1) {
$AttSkillStats[9]=1;
} else {
$AttSkillStats[11]=1;
};
} else {

if ($numAggression<9) {
$SpecAggression = "Aggression type";
$AttSkillStats[mt_rand(6,17)]=1;
$AttSkillStats[mt_rand(6,17)]=1;
} else {

if ($numAggression<12) {
$SpecAggression = "Aggression type";
$AttSkillStats[7]=1;
$AttSkillStats[mt_rand(6,17)]=1;
} else {
$SpecAggression = "Aggression type";
$AttSkillStats[7]=mt_rand(1,3);
$AttSkillStats[$PeaceSkills [mt_rand(0,count($PeaceSkills))]]=mt_rand(1,
3);
};
};
};
};

//7. Sociopolitical Attitude

$SocioDesc = array("Social/Political type", "Social/Political type",
"Social/Political type", "Social/Political type", "Social/Political type",
"Social/Political type", "Social/Political type", "Social/Political type",
"Social/Political type", "Social/Political type", "Social/Political type");
$SocioPolitical = $SocioDesc[mt_rand(0,5)+mt_rand(0,5)];

//X. Display the results
echo "<table width=\"100%\"><tr><td
width=\"50%\"><p><strong>Species Form:</strong> ".$form."<br />\n";
echo "<strong>Traits:</strong> ".$traits."</p>\n";
echo "<h2>Physical Details</h2>\n<p>";
for ($counter=0;$counter<10;$counter++) {
if (((($counter<4) && ($PhysicalDetails[$counter]=="0")) ||
($counter==9) &&
($PhysicalDetails[$counter]=="None"))) {
echo "No
".substr($PhysicalDescription[$counter],0,strlen($PhysicalDescription[$co
unter])-1-((($counter>0)*1))."<br />\n";
} else {
echo "<strong>".$PhysicalDescription[$counter]."</strong> ".
$PhysicalDetails[$counter]."<br />\n";
};

}
echo "</p>\n";
echo "<h2>Culture</h2>\n<p>";
echo "<strong>Tech Level:</strong> ".$TechLevel . "<br />\n";
echo "<strong>Civilisation Type:</strong> ".$CivResults[$CivType]."<br case ($numForm==14 || $numForm==15): $form = "Text description of
/>\n";
if ($CivExtras!="") {
echo "<strong>Civilisation Notes:</strong> ".$CivExtras."<br />\n";
};

echo "<strong>Species Aggression:</strong> ".$SpecAggression."<br
/>\n";
echo "<strong>Sociopolitical Attitude:</strong> ".$SocioPolitical."<br
/>\n";
echo "</p></td>\n<td>";
echo "<h3>Attributes</h3>\n<p>";
for ($counter=0;$counter<6;$counter++) {
echo "<strong>".$AttSkillDesc[$counter].":</strong> ".
$AttSkillStats[$counter]."<br />\n";
};

echo "</p>\n";
echo "<h3>Skills</h3>\n<p>";
for ($counter=6;$counter<count($AttSkillDesc);$counter++) {
echo "<strong>".$AttSkillDesc[$counter].":</strong> ".
$AttSkillStats[$counter]."<br />\n";
};

echo "</p></td></tr></table>\n";
?>
<?php
echo "<p>Code written by <strong>Curufea</strong></p>";
echo "<p>Hit 'refresh' to generate a new result</p>";
//Random Species Generator
//Generic Version
//1. Basic Form of Species:
$numForm = mt_rand(1,6)+mt_rand(1,6)+mt_rand(1,6); // simulating 3D6
switch($numForm ){

case 3: $form = "Text description of form";
$traits = "list of traits";
break;

case ($numForm==4 || $numForm==5) : $form = "Text description of
form";
$traits = "list of traits";
break;

case ($numForm==6 || $numForm==7): $form = "Text description of
form";
$traits = "list of traits";
break;

case ($numForm==8 || $numForm==9): $form = "Text description of
form";
$traits = "list of traits";
break;

case ($numForm==10 || $numForm==11): $form = "Text description of
form";
$traits = "list of traits";
break;

case ($numForm==12 || $numForm==13): $form = "Text description of
form";
$traits = "list of traits";
break;

case ($numForm==14 || $numForm==15): $form = "Text description of
form";
$traits = "list of traits";
break;

case ($numForm==16 || $numForm==17): $form = "Text description of
form";
$traits = "list of traits";
break;
}
}

```

```

case 18: $form = "Text description of form";
$traits = "list of traits";
break;
};
//2. Physical Details:

// Appendages and Senses
// Array is - Limbs, Head, Tail, Other, Sight, Smell, Hearing, Taste, Other
$PhysicalDetails = array();
$PhysicalDescription = array ("Arms and
Legs:", "Heads:", "Tails:", "Unusual Appendages:", "Sight:", "Smell:",
"Hearing:", "Taste:", "Unusual Senses:");
$PhysicalResults = array(
2=>array("# limbs", "# heads", "# tails", "# unusual", "sight mod", "smell
mod", "hearing mod", "taste mod", "unusual mod"),
3=>array("# limbs", "# heads", "# tails", "# unusual", "sight mod", "smell
mod", "hearing mod", "taste mod", "unusual mod"),
4=>array("# limbs", "# heads", "# tails", "# unusual", "sight mod", "smell
mod", "hearing mod", "taste mod", "unusual mod"),
5=>array("# limbs", "# heads", "# tails", "# unusual", "sight mod", "smell
mod", "hearing mod", "taste mod", "unusual mod"),
6=>array("# limbs", "# heads", "# tails", "# unusual", "sight mod", "smell
mod", "hearing mod", "taste mod", "unusual mod"),
7=>array("# limbs", "# heads", "# tails", "# unusual", "sight mod", "smell
mod", "hearing mod", "taste mod", "unusual mod"),
8=>array("# limbs", "# heads", "# tails", "# unusual", "sight mod", "smell
mod", "hearing mod", "taste mod", "unusual mod"),
9=>array("# limbs", "# heads", "# tails", "# unusual", "sight mod", "smell
mod", "hearing mod", "taste mod", "unusual mod"),
10=>array("# limbs", "# heads", "# tails", "# unusual", "sight mod", "smell
mod", "hearing mod", "taste mod", "unusual mod"),
11=>array("# limbs", "# heads", "# tails", "# unusual", "sight mod", "smell
mod", "hearing mod", "taste mod", "unusual mod"),
12=>array("# limbs", "# heads", "# tails", "# unusual", "sight mod", "smell
mod", "hearing mod", "taste mod", "unusual mod")
);
// Note - for any of the results (such as "# limbs) you can use a PHP
function instead [e.g. put in a random number such as mt_rand(1,6)]
```

for (\$counter=0;\$counter<10;\$counter++) {
\$numDetails = mt_rand(1,6)+mt_rand(1,6); // simulate 2D6
\$PhysicalDetails[\$counter]=\$PhysicalResults[\$numDetails][\$counter];
};

//3. Tech Level:
\$TechLevel = mt_rand(1,6)+mt_rand(0,5); // or whatever you need to
simulate techlevel

//4. Civilisation:

\$CivType = mt_rand(0,5)+mt_rand(0,5)+mt_rand(0,5)+
((\$TechLevel>5)*1); // generate civ type modified by tech level
\$CivResults = array("Civ type", "Civ type", "Civ type", "Civ type", "Civ
type", "Civ type", "Civ type", "Civ type", "Civ type", "Civ type",
"Civ type", "ICiv type", "Civ type", "Civ type", "Civ type", "Civ type",
"Civ type");
if (\$CivType>9){
if (\$CivType>11){
if (\$CivType>13){
if (mt_rand(1,2)==1) {
\$CivExtras = "Extra notes on a variant for this Civ type";
} else {
\$CivExtras = "Extra notes on a variant for this Civ type";
};
} else {

```

switch (mt_rand(1,3)) {

Case 1:
$CivExtras = "Extra notes on a variant for this Civ type";
break;

Case 2:
$CivExtras = "Extra notes on a variant for this Civ type";
break;

Case 3:
$CivExtras = "Extra notes on a variant for this Civ type";
break;
};

} else {
$numColonies = mt_rand(1,3);

if ($numColonies>1) {
$CivExtras = "Has colonised ".$numColonies." planets in this system.";
} else {
$CivExtras = "Has colonised ".$numColonies." planet in this system.";
};

$ind=0;
for ($counter=0;$counter<$numColonies;$counter++) {
if (mt_rand(1,3)==3) {
$ind++;
};
};
if ($ind>0) {

if ($numColonies>1) {
$CivExtras .= " ".$ind." of these colonies is independent.";
} else {
$CivExtras .= " This colony is independent.";
};

};

} else {
$CivExtras = "";
};

//5. Attributes and Skills
$AttSkillDesc = array("Attribute", "Attribute", "Attribute", "Attribute",
"Attribute", "Attribute", "Physical or Combat Skill", "Academic Skill",
"Tech Skill", "Physical or Combat Skill", "Academic Skill", "Physical or
Combat Skill", "TechSkill", "Academic Skill", "Physical or Combat Skill",
"Physical or Combat Skill", "Tech Skill", "Tech Skill");
$PhysComSkills = array(6,9,11,14,15); // used to allocate skill points from
a random sized pool
$TechSkills = array(8,12,16,17); // used to allocate skill points from a
randomsized pool
$AcadSkills = array(7,10,13); // used to allocate skill points from a
random sized pool
//Process starting skills
for ($counter=0;$counter<count($AttSkillDesc);$counter++) {
if ($counter<6) {
$AttSkillStats[$counter]=mt_rand(1,6); // Starting attributes are random
between 1 and 6
} else {
$AttSkillStats[$counter]=0; // Starting skills are zero
};

};
```

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Interview: Steffan O'Sullivan

RPGR: Steffan O'Sullivan is the author of Fudge, first published in 1992 and now in seven editions, two supplements for the same, the single-page SLUG (Simple, Laidback, Universal Game), GURPS Bestiary for 1st through 3rd editions of that game, GURPS Bunnies & Burrows, following on from the classic original, GURPS Fantasy Bestiary, GURPS Swashbucklers, and Sherpa, the RPG capable of being played while hiking. Steffan's work is also found in GURPS Magic, Russia, Black Ops, Warehouse 23, Martial Arts, Fantasy, Horror, and Magic Items I & II. RPGR = RPG Review. SOS = Steffan O'Sullivan

RPGR: Thank you Steffan for agreeing to be part of this interview...

Firstly, tell us about how you came to be involved in RPGs, game writing, and what you do for a real income?

SOS: Thank YOU for asking me, Lev! Since that last question has the shortest answer, let me answer it now so it doesn't get buried after a long story: I currently work in an academic library for my real income. I've done many, many different jobs in my life, and now that I'm nearing retirement age, this one suits me just fine. It's quiet, satisfying and even meaningful work, and I love books.

I started in RPGs in a very different way than the average player. For one thing, I'm older - RPGs weren't invented until I was out of college and married, for example. Although I grew up playing many board games, including Avalon Hill games in the 1960s, by the time D&D first came out, I wasn't playing any games beyond Chess and Jotto with my wife. After my divorce, I drifted into a game store to reconnect with the gaming hobby of my youth. This would have been late 1977, and the store carried a huge amount of what I guess must have been 1st edition AD&D. I'd never heard of an RPG, and thumbed through a couple of the books. They made absolutely no sense to me, so I put them back, bought a wargame, and played it solo over the next few weeks.

When I went back to the game store for another game, I was still drawn to this strange AD&D: I grew up reading all the classic fantasy and SF stories that influenced Gygax and Arneson, so it was very much something that intrigued me. But the complexity and seemingly endless quantity of books were off-putting. Then I noticed a thin booklet, Bunnies & Burrows (B&B), which was obviously based on Watership Down, a novel close to my heart. It was very compact and had no supplements, so I decided to buy it.

I held onto it for a few years (!) before I found some people to try it with. By then I was in my mid-thirties, involved in a graduate-level program that met one weekend a month for three years. Saturday evenings were free, and a group of us played B&B, nearly once a month, for most of those three years. The youngest player was in his late twenties; the oldest in her fifties. Only one other person had even heard of an RPG before, and he'd only played original D&D a couple of times five years or so earlier. I was the GM, and didn't get to actually be a player for another four years after my first GM session...

I never did understand some of the rules in the game - I still don't get "levels", for example. It didn't matter - as most people reading this probably understand, the point of an RPG is to have fun, not necessarily to adhere strictly to rules. And we had a blast! They turned out to be good players, and I turned out to be a pretty good GM. I had an advanced degree in Theatre, so I guess that's not too surprising.

It wasn't until later, comparing B&B with other games, that I actually came to see how lucky I was to start with B&B. And I don't just mean the setting (though it's *still* my favorite setting!) - Dennis Sustare and Frank Robinson really did a great job with this concise set of rules, especially given how early in the history of RPGs it was released. In my introduction to GURPS B&B I list some ways in which the original B&B was ground-breaking. And even though I didn't understand some of the rules, that's more a flaw in my mental makeup than in B&B. For example, most gamers understand "levels", but they baffled me so much I felt compelled to translate the setting to a skill-based system when I

first encountered one.

Later, at the local college where I live in rural New Hampshire, I got to be a player for the first time with the student Medieval Society (and informal gaming club). It was my first experience in a game with a human character, too. I think it was Gamma World. I began to explore rules systems, and ran Tunnels & Trolls for a few games before discovering The Fantasy Trip (TFT). We played that for a while (both with human and bunny PCs) until Man to Man (the first proto-GURPS book) came out. I started converting B&B to GURPS even before the Basic Set was released!

I'd read a fair few RPGs by this time, and GURPS was clearly the best designed system I'd seen. I was impressed enough to buy every GURPS book that came out. We played arena combat games as a boardgame to learn the advanced combat systems. I began to have questions about certain things in the rules, and I would type out (yes, on a typewriter - I didn't own a computer at that point) letters to SJ Games with questions. These letters became weekly - must have driven Steve Jackson absolutely mad, poor man.

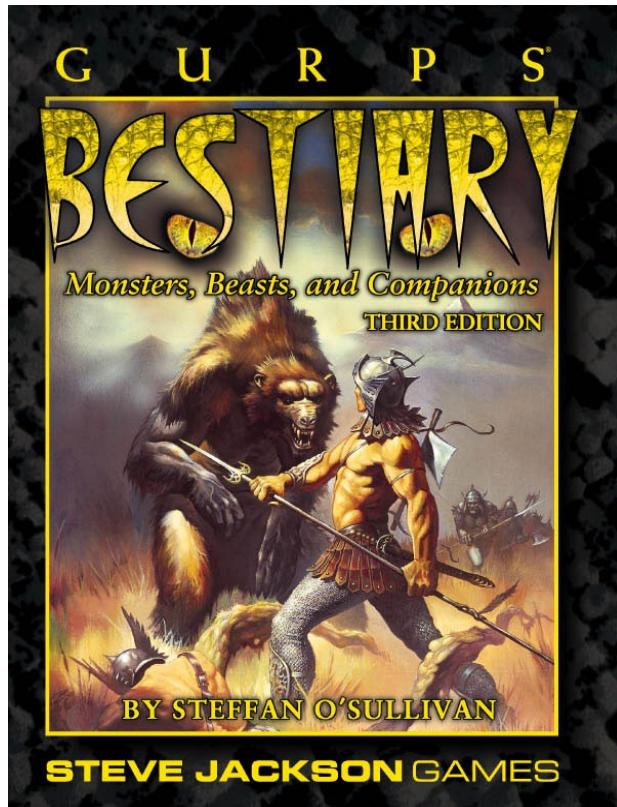
And then I decided I wanted to try writing a supplement for GURPS, and bought a computer with that purpose in mind (an 8088 clone). So I submitted a proposal for GURPS Pirates, as I have a bachelor's degree in 17th-century history and a great love for all things swashbuckling. The next week I got a phone call from Steve Jackson! He told me my letters were so impressive that he was pinning them to the bulletin board at the office, saying, "THIS is what playtesting should look like!" (He later made a badge for me at GenCon that read "Playtester from Hell!") He said he'd received my proposal and he had a counter proposal. He asked if I thought I could write a Bestiary, as that was a higher priority, and his contracted Bestiary writer had just quit. He'd hold the Pirate project for me until this was done, not giving it to someone else. He said that after many months of reading my letters he knew three things about me: 1) I could write; 2) I had a very wide range of interests that included animals; and 3) I knew the GURPS system as well as anyone and better than most.

So I agreed. You see, after getting my BA in history, I had done two years of pre-med, largely in Biology and Chemistry, and enjoyed Zoology very much. I felt confident I could research animals well enough to translate to game terms, and my editor, Mike Moe, came up with the basic Animal Template that made it much easier for me to do that translation.

It was a MAJOR amount of work - I tend to be a perfectionist, and since I worked in a library, I had good research skills and access to Interlibrary Loan. I easily consulted over 600 books just to write the original GURPS Bestiary! I discovered lots of interesting things, such as that "stirges" in D&D was a typo. The Roman animal was called a "strix" and the plural is "striges". Gygax's finger slipped and a new creature was born ...

At any rate, that's how I became involved in playing and writing RPG material, and I'm sure that's much more than you really wanted to read, sorry!

RPG: You have been very much a part of Steve Jackson Games for many years, even during the notorious Secret Service Raid phase, I believe. Any particularly memorable times you'd care to share with us?



SOS: First, just to clarify this in case someone gets the wrong impression: I've never worked for Steve Jackson Games. I was a freelance writer, living 2,000 miles away. So my "memorable times" won't be indicative of life in the SJ Games office...

I first met Steve face to face at an Origins convention, I'd guess it was 1987. I ran a number of GURPS games at the con, and he noticed that a fair number of players from my games came to his booth and bought GURPS books afterwards. Steve decided to ask me: if he paid my way, would I attend GenCon later that summer and run games for him? I happily agreed, and this continued, both Origins and GenCon, for the next seven years. (After that, Grey Ghost paid my way for another few years.)

Steve and I always got along well - I still consider him a friend, though I admit I haven't talked with him in years now. Steve's a great guy I wish I knew better. He was always **very** good to me, even when I was the bad guy in our relationship. For example, at one point I had the contract to write GURPS Faerie - this was 1990-1991, after the Secret Service raid. I was struggling with the book, as I found that GURPS, while a superb game for human-level characters, tended to do less well at the extreme edges of attributes and skills. Gaming Faerie requires both very tiny and very huge PCs. It also requires a completely different take on the laws of physics as humans understand them.

So, I was having trouble with the mechanics, though I'd done a **lot** of research and was deeply engrossed in the world of Faerie. At GenCon 1991, I finally told him and his head editor at the time that I simply couldn't write the book and wanted to break the contract. I was with the editor that evening, without Steve around. The editor wanted me to turn over all of my Faerie research, insisting it belonged to SJ Games by the contract. I refused, as I was considering publishing it in a systemless book, but offered him all of the GURPS mechanics work I had done up to then. The editor was furious with me, told me my mechanics were crap, and he didn't want them.

The next day, I saw Steve. He requested, rather than demanded, my research and I gave Steve the same answer I'd given the editor. Instead of the editor's angry retort, Steve sighed, and then said, "Well, what DO you want to write for me?" Now **that** is a class response!

We had tried previously to get the license to do GURPS B&B, but failed. We'd even written Richard Adams trying to get the Watership Down license, and failed. (Adams himself thought it was a wonderful idea, but his publishers were very hostile to it.) Nevertheless, when Steve asked me that, I said, "The book I really want to do is GURPS B&B." He sighed again.

A week later he called me. "Write the book," he said. "I got the license." I tell you, very few people in this industry have as much class as Steve Jackson.

Another particularly vivid memory concerning Steve Jackson Games is attending the trial of "Steve Jackson Games et al. vs. the United States Secret Service." That "et al." includes myself and my friends Walter Milliken and Beth McCoy. I'd been living as a particularly poor self-represented actor for a while, and didn't even own a suit to wear to the trial. I bought one for \$5 at a church rummage sale. At the trial, Steve Jackson had to tie my tie for me - it had been over 20 years since I'd tied a tie, and I couldn't remember how!

The trial was absolutely fascinating, much more than I would have thought possible. The judge knew nothing about role-playing games, nothing about a BBS or what a modem was, and had never even used a computer. It took a while to educate him as to what it meant that the SS confiscated SJ Games' computer equipment, read our email and deleted it without letting us read it. One of those deleted emails was a plea from me to Steve for my overdue royalties so I could pay my rent, which is why I was invited to be part of the trial. I was also the one actually on the BBS at the time the SS pulled the plug... At any rate, after a few days of testimony, the judge finally understood enough to know the SS had badly bungled this project, and he chewed out the head agent for over 15 minutes, up and down. It was extremely gratifying, and the look of satisfaction on Steve's face, after three years of frustration and anger over the whole debacle

and near bankruptcy, was a joy to observe. It's also kind of cool that I can say that I took the US Secret Service to court and won ...

And finally, one of my fondest moments associated with SJ Games was at WorldCon 1989 in Boston. This is the big international science fiction convention that moves around every year. SJ Games had just published both GURPS Witch World and GURPS Conan, and Steve managed to get Andre Norton, L. Sprague de Camp, and Katherine Cook de Camp to attend a three-hour, small leisurely breakfast to which I was also invited! (He'd had to correspond with Andre about the Witch World license, of course, and the de Camps handled the Conan license in those days.) There were only about a dozen people there, and it was very informal, friendly and casual. Getting to meet Andre, especially, still means a lot to me. ----

RPGR: Your writing style is casual, almost chatty, but you manage to pack a wealth of information in short summaries - the sidebar "How to be French" in GURPS Swashbucklers is, for example, captures *l'esprit des la nation*. Somehow you managed to avoid the twin perils of being conversational yet lightweight or densely yet overly formal. For all of us struggling writers, how do you do it? What's your secret?

SOS: Wow, thanks for the kind words! I don't really have any secret - I'm a brutal self-editor, though. Some parts of my books have been re-written over 20 times, trying to trim the fat out and get the words right. It was Steve Jackson who taught me the phrase, "priming the pump." He meant that in order to get started, you have to just pour words out and write, write, write. But while it's a necessary first step to get the juices flowing, most of that initial stuff isn't worth keeping. I learned to write, write, write - and then cut, cut, cut. Every now and then I buy an RPG book and after reading the first three pages realize there's only about one useful paragraph in there. Someone didn't know how to go back and edit the necessary priming of the pump ...

The only other thing I can think of is that I've always been an avid reader. If you read a lot, you learn which styles you like enough to steal and which ones to avoid ...

RPGR: Environmentalism and animal welfare are clearly a large part of your values; you are notable for donating a portion of all royalties to these causes. Would you care to elaborate more on these attitudes? Do you have, for example, a utilitarian approach towards animal welfare? Do you ever get depressed about the state of the ecosystem and the apparent inability of the world's governments to engage seriously on these issues? Can bunnies and humans co-exist?

SOS: I don't have any answers to the big questions, of course. I'm not a scientist. Of course it's easy to get depressed about the state of the ecosystem, yes, but that doesn't really help anyone or anything, so I try to avoid it. I do what I can to have a small footprint, and most of my charity money indeed goes to environmental groups or animal shelters, except for major disasters like Hurricane Katrina, the big tsunami a few years ago, or the Haitian earthquake. I think my own attitude towards animals was expressed remarkably clearly by Philip K. Dick in his book, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep. Simply put: anyone who doesn't have empathy for other humans and for animals isn't really fully human. Isidore's horrified reaction to the android calmly tearing the legs off a spider pretty much mirrors my own reactions. I actually shudder when the Garfield comic gets into spider bashing - I can't see anything remotely funny about squashing such a useful animal.

I don't really love all animals. For example, I'm actually not that fond of dogs, and wouldn't want to live with one. But I'll certainly never harm one unless it's actively attacking someone - and even then, I'll try restraint first. And, living in rural New England, mosquitoes, black flies and ticks are things I wish I could avoid. Yet I understand the ecosystem needs them, so only kill the ones that personally attack me.

RPGR: On a related topic, were you surprised by the success of GURPS Bunnies & Burrows? Do you prefer to play realistic or anthropomorphised? Fingered or non-fingered? Were you inspired at all by Paul Kidd's games,

such as Lace & Steel and Albedo?

SOS: This is quite a strange question. The "success" of GURPS Bunnies & Burrows? This title had a very small print run; only had one printing; and still took almost ten years to sell out! It was a very slow seller for Steve, but his own comment on it was, "Sometimes you have to do one for love of the hobby." So the "success" is really a very low level of success, and that doesn't really surprise me, no. I've talked with enough gamers by now who consider the idea of playing a rabbit to be weird and unpleasant that I'm not surprised it's not a big seller. Of course, since it's my favorite genre, I always think people *should* like it better, but that's just me being human, not realistic. Every game involving animals is somewhat anthropomorphic, of course. But I definitely prefer games with minimal anthropomorphism. Non-fingered, definitely. Although I love books and comics with anthropomorphic characters, such as The Wind in the Willows, Breed to Come, Usagi Yojimbo and Scrooge McDuck, in gaming I prefer the Watership Down model. I've never read Albedo, and though I've read Lace & Steel, it hasn't been a big influence on me, no. I did translate the Lace & Steel social combat rules to GURPS Swashbucklers in a magazine article once, though.



RPGR: Real and fantastic animals is a prominent theme in the game supplements that you've designed. But notably there is no alien supplements. Is science fiction just something that you don't play, is alien ecology too weird, or is it that you just haven't had the opportunity?

SOS: There are some SF creatures in the first edition GURPS Bestiary, but I think they were pulled in later editions as by then someone else had written Space Bestiary. There are some sample SF characters in Fudge, also. But I don't think I'd be the best one to write an SF supplement, at least not a mainstream one. I'm a big science fiction fan, meaning reading. (Not so much watching - there aren't very many SF movies / TV series I've thought were worth watching a second time, while there are literally scores of SF books I've read multiple times.) I started reading SF in the 1950s and have never stopped. But I've never really gamed much in an SF setting. I've run Fudge Gatecrasher at conventions, and in other games had PCs visit the Clans of the Alphane Moon, or visit Skaith, and even written a sort-of SF supplement for Fudge (A Bad Day at the Lab), but these are not mainstream SF. Most SF gamers tend to prefer harder SF than I do. I don't care about the gadgets and realistic space travel - I'm more in it for the interesting settings and cultures you can encounter in SF. I can't stand aliens who are basically humans with funny foreheads or feline features. Yet most SF gamers seem to like these things, so I let it alone. ----

(Image: Dimmy Nimwagon aka Steffan O'Sullivan, 1985)

RPGR: From your initial proposal on rec.games.design to current editions, Fudge has been quite a success with spin-off systems (e.g., FATE), an adjective-based trait level, specialised Fudge dice and a high degree of customisation. These are, of course, the most well-known and obvious components of the game. What do you think are the reasons for the game's success? What could be improved?

SOS: The game's success hinges largely on the fact that it's available for free, of course. I have no delusions it would be

as well-known as it is if it weren't.

I don't know what in it could be improved. To be honest, I'm burned out on tinkering with it - I like it the way it is and it's the system I translate almost every setting to. I did write, fairly recently, a new way to use 3d6 with Fudge, hoping to bypass the need for specialized dice. It's a free file at <http://rpggeek.com/rpgitem/54371/3d6-fudge> if you're interested. But in general, I'm done thinking about changing Fudge, as it matches my tastes. Others can tinker with it with my heartiest blessings, of course - that's what it's for! ----

RPGR: Can you summarise Sherpa for our readers? I've heard that it is a game for hiking, based on the Himalayan people, uses the game's title for the seven characteristics (Strength, Health, Experience, Reasoning, Profession and Agility) and can even use a stopwatch for a randomiser! Is this all true? Was the game developed through hiking in the Himalayas themselves?

SOS: Well, that's about half true! The six characteristics are indeed as you named, and the first edition was actually called PHASER. It was developed in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, not the Himalayas. I wrote the first draft in about three hours - friends were coming over to play a game, but it was the first glorious day of Spring after an ugly winter, and I wanted to be outdoors. So we went hiking and played the game - which does indeed use a stopwatch as a randomizer - and it worked pretty well! It took a few dozen rewrites (Sherpa is my exercise in conciseness), and the name change came when a friend came back from Nepal and mentioned she'd spent some time with Sherpas. I realized it was an anagram for PHASER, and closely associated with hiking, so used the name, and simply dedicated the game to them. I've never been to the Himalayas myself - the closest I've come is Malaysia, which isn't very close at all, except in comparison with New Hampshire. You can use the back of a business card as a character sheet. It's a class-based system, something I thought I'd never write after discovering TFT so long ago! But I discovered that one benefit of using character classes is that you can be very concise: one word sums up a whole lot of things. The best part of the game, though, is actually playing it on a hiking trail. I'm lucky in that I can be on a lovely mountain trail in a half hour drive from my home. When the GM says something like, "You're walking on a trail just like this one, when you hear some rustling in the bushes, oh, up THERE," it's a very different feeling from playing at a table, or on a computer, or reading a book, or even watching a movie. The trail you're on suddenly feels like very uncertain ground to be fighting on - heavens, you can twist an ankle just walking on this rocky path, never mind running or fighting! And that upslope side where the rustling noise is coming from: yikes! If an ambush party came bouncing down that hill slope towards you, they'd have such momentum that even if they didn't skewer you, they'd bowl you over! Yes, playing an RPG in the wild is great fun - and yet, oddly, I don't care for LARPing. Go figure. Now I must admit that a Venn diagram of role-players and nature hikers shows an extremely tiny overlap, so I can't say it's been a good seller. But it's not a bad game, and I'm proud of it. And, to tie this back to an earlier question, you can buy a copy by making a donation to an animal shelter. ----

RPGR: So what is your next release to the gaming world? How much longer can we expect to see your works gracing gaming tables around the world?

SOS: My next release? I can't say. I really don't write much anymore. In the summer of 2010 I entered a 24-Hour RPG contest: design a complete game in a single contiguous 24-hour period. My entry, which took third place in the contest out of 32 entries, can be found at <http://rpggeek.com/rpgitem/79821/the-bremen-town-musicians>. My next release may actually be an expansion of that setting, and in Fudge. Or it may not. You see, I'm feeling old, at least in my body. My job, as pleasant as it is, takes most of my energy. I no longer hike the rugged trails to mountain peaks, preferring the gentler paths through lovely woods along a river. I find it easier now to *play* games rather than to design them and especially to go through the 20-odd rewrites it takes to get the words right. I'm not really a good first draft writer - my words need lots of tweaking, and that's work. And of all the seven deadly sins, my favorite has always been Sloth. So I suspect, unless I win the lottery and can utilize the energy I currently devote to work, I'm done with big projects. And that's okay, too. My life is good. Thanks again for interviewing me!

Designer's Notes: The Celestial Empire: Roleplaying in Imperial China

by Gianni Vacca

Game Line: Basic Roleplaying

Category: Historical setting

Retail Price: £21.99

Size: 160pp

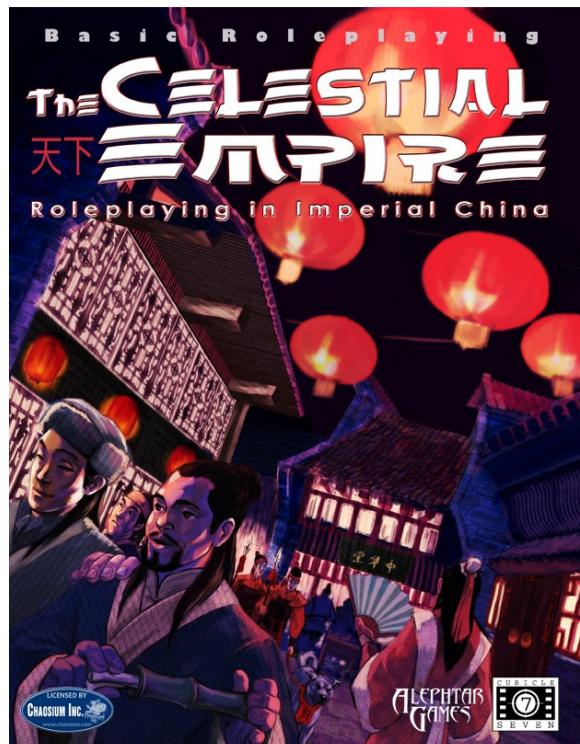
Interior Art: B&W

Author: Gianni Vacca

Stock Code: CB75804

ISBN: 978-0-85744-041-9

This game has a long story, going all the way back to my young-adult days. Like many Westerners, my idea of ‘fantasy’ has always been bounded by Professor Tolkien’s Middle Earth on the larger, epic side, and by Fritz Leiber’s Fafhrd and Grey Mouser stories on the smaller, gritty side. The Arabian Nights were possibly the single non-European fantasy setting I could think of. This all changed very suddenly when I saw the classic 1987 Tsui Hark film *A Chinese Ghost Story* (which wasn’t really a classic at the time, at least not in Europe) in an art cinema. It was an epiphany. Suddenly fantasy meant impossible action, and not only swordplay. It meant sex, and not only romance. It meant crazy Taoism, and not only stern wizardry. It meant myriad deities, and not only cod mythology. It meant ‘beware government officials’ as opposed to ‘trust your local paladin’. I toyed with the idea of adapting the role-playing games I was using at the time (D&D, T&T, MERP) to a Chinese fantasy setting but to no avail. Alas, I was too inexperienced, and I certainly didn’t feel like creating my own game system.



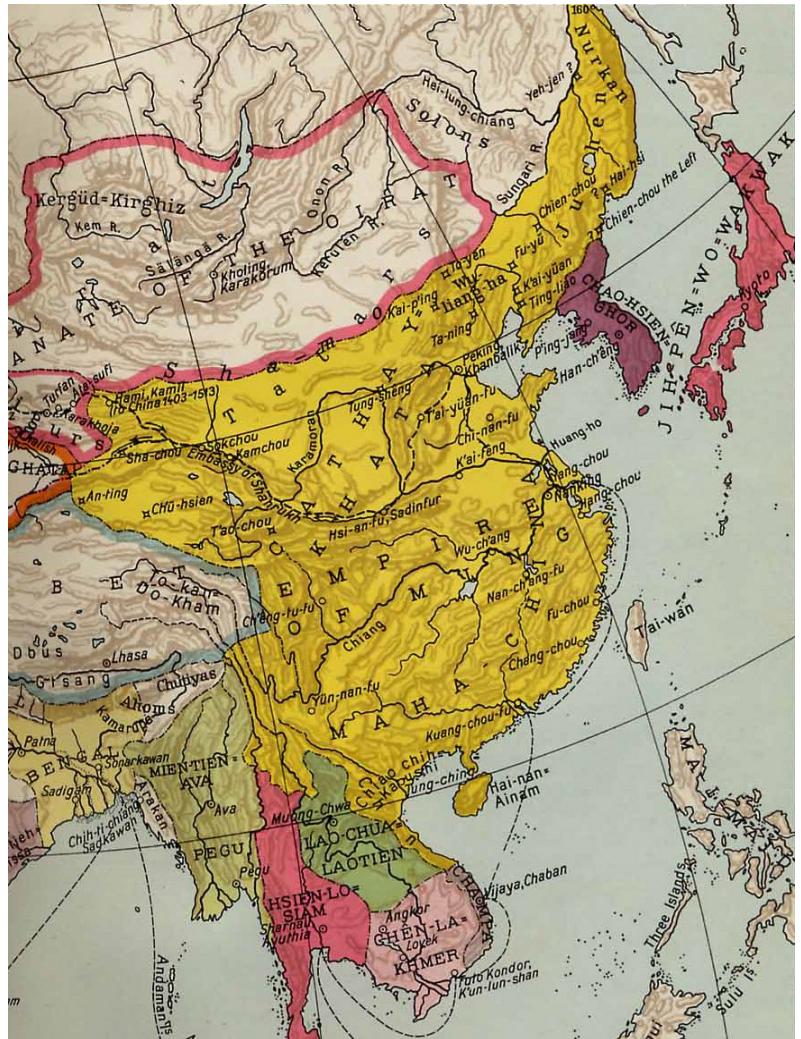
The urge faded, and the idea sort of simply hovered in the back of my head for about ten years. I did have a look at the few existing ‘China flavoured’ role-playing games, but I found them terribly clichéd, and the fact that they featured imitation Chinese settings with elements from various time periods, as far apart as several thousand years, added to their unsavouriness. What would you think of a role-playing game about England that mixed the Knights of the Round Table and Sherlock Holmes? Rubbish, I reckon. Well, that’s exactly what most role-playing games about China do!

In 2000, *Casus Belli*, the leading French-language role-playing magazine, published a China-themed issue, which was bogged down with the usual clichés and anachronisms. At that time, in my eyes, the need for a historically accurate rule set about Imperial China became too acute – I had to do something!

Since I have always been opposed to designing a game system for each single game, the first thing was to find a game system to build the game upon. In 1997, Chaosium’s Basic Roleplaying System had been translated and published in French, so I reckoned that that would make a perfectly sound basis for the game system, especially since the Call of Cthulhu and Hawkmoon/Elric were so popular in France.

As a designer, I wanted the game to be history-based and to reflect Chinese culture, yet it still had to be a game, not a

boring catalogue of rulers, deities, and places. There are libraries for that kind of information. So I started to watch as many Hong Kong wuxia films as I could, and to read as many translations of Chinese fantasy fiction as I could, filling in many notebooks with notes and drawings.



During the course of my work, Chaosium luckily published a new revised version of the Basic Roleplaying System with many optional rules. This greatly helped me in streamlining the magic system and the martial arts part of the rule set, which had started to diverge from BRP canon. As a result, The Celestial Empire has stayed close to the time-proven mechanisms of BRP, and any group of players familiar with the Basic Roleplaying System may start a Celestial Empire game in no time.

Designing The Celestial Empire was an eight-year labour of love, and I sincerely hope that players of this game will enjoy the immersion in Chinese history and culture. Yet history-based does not mean boring: depending on the game master's setting, a Celestial Empire game may capture the exotic bewilderment of The Journey to the West, the virile excitement of The Water Margin, the investigative astuteness of Judge Dee, or the kinetic fantasy of Hong Kong wuxia film! Also, all Chinese terms have been consistently Romanised and are shown with the original characters to add to the immersion.

Dragons (and other creatures) of the Bilybara

by Lev Lafayette

with Michael Cole, Torquil Gault, Rodney Brown, Les Mallett, Wayne Tufek, Doug Brook, and Peter Danaher

In Issue 2 of RPG Review a brief article summarised Ralis, an Australia-like setting for the D&D3.x and Pathfinder systems. "Ralis has a similar lay of the land as the realworld Australia. It has similar weather patterns, it has a similar landscape, it has the same creepy crawlers, similar population centres (significantly reduced in size, of course), a similar history and, as a result, similar problems." To summarise, climatically the region is like that of the last glacial period, the Würm period, between 15,000 to 10,000 years ago. The continent has become very arid in large areas. The indigenous culture are nature worshipers of some significant magical ability, although they are culturally split between those who wish to exploit the natural environment ("Orcs") and those who wish to operate in harmony with it ("Elves"). The two groups are indistinguishable in appearance and even co-exist in the same tribe. Megafauna are abound including giant wombats, which weighed up to two tonne (often used as slow riding animals), giant kangaroos (up to 10 feet in height, over two hundred kilogrammes in weight), dropbears (a sort of cross between a massive koala and a Tasmanian devil), tree dwelling marsupial lions, carnivorous kangaroos, giant echindas that fire spikes, an intelligent species of possum, giant snakes, giant spiders, and, of course, many wryms and dragons. In addition to this are the colonisers; Zeelanders, Iberians and Albionians. The Zeelanders have established a number of settlements on the west coast and are in conflict with the Iberians who are in the north and west stemming from a larger conflict over the Spice Islands. The Albionians have colonised the coastal region of the south and east with a number of larger townships.

The following is a story based in Ralis, documenting the conflict between three great dragons that command much over the land, the conflict that occurs... It is designed for a group of 4-6 characters levels 15 and up. The storyline involves the PCs successively defeating no less than three major dragons with respective factions before coming into conflict with the great dragon Tiamat who many years prior engulfed the Rainbow Serpent. If the PCs can defeat Tiamat the Rainbow Serpent will return and the lands will become lush and fruitful. The three dragons which control the lands present themselves as gigantic forms of reptilians; the Green Dragon appears as a giant salt-water crocodile, the Red Dragon as a frilled-necked lizard, and the Blue Dragon as a giant snake (specifically, for the scientifically inclined, of the genus *Wonambi*); each are Ancient. It is important for plot purposes that the PCs *end* the story with a scale (or other item) which can summon a gold dragon of the desert. Each of the dragons of the Bilybara have within their heart a massive local gemstone, the size of a man's head, of an appropriate hue (chrysoprase, red agate, blue sapphire, yellow topaz).

Despite the title of this story, statistics for the dragons are not provided as they are standard as per the Monster Manual. Individual DMs will, of course, select particular spells appropriately. What is more important is the individual personalities, which correlate to the environs and culture where they live. The Green has a lush and sensual approach, highly interested in the mystical, is quite egalitarian, and takes a great deal of interest and direct involvement in the region. The Red on the other hand is highly ascetic, hierachial, utterly dedicated to their dry, elemental, work. Finally the Blue is otherworldly, preferring to act through intermediaries.

Three Colours Green: Captured!

The first session involves the PCs being ambushed by Iberian slavers. This can occur in a variety of circumstances and places within a reasonable distance from the north-west corner of Ralis. Led by Martuel Jose Isabella Dos Porto and a large number of evil fey, the slavers co-ordinate a well-planned attack on the rural base of the PCs, using a variety of 'ambush and capture', including silence and entangle spells and various poisons, especially Carrion Crawler Brain Juice (DMG p297) and inhaled Drow poison (DMG p297). Once captured the PCs are drugged and bundled into a covered wagon team led by diprotodonts, along with any others captured in the process. They are interrupted at regular intervals to ensure that they cannot prepare for daily spells. Martuel and his group are very well known among the people of the

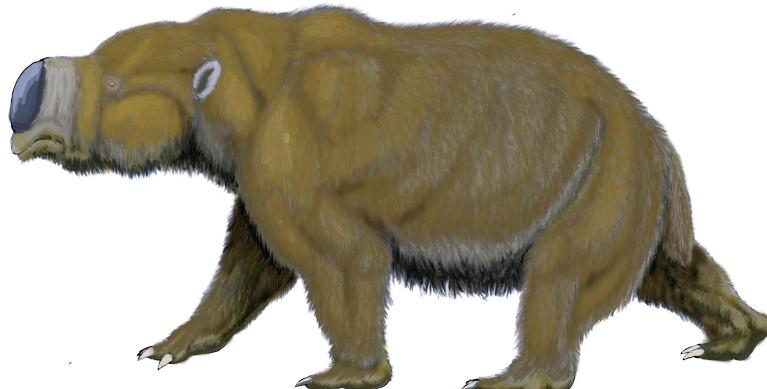
north-west of Ralis as he scours the land for likely victims to be sold in Finisterra, the court of Iberian Ralis.

The party should be given numerous opportunities to find their way out of this captivity. Ropes (DC 30) and manacles (DC 30) will prove to be challenging to Escape Artist checks, as will the well-designed bolt-locks (DC 30) with Hold Portal cast (Strength check at 25). The real opportunity will come following a great deal of commotion, the sound of shouting, and wild melee (simple Listen checks); at a certain point the smell of fire will be evident.. The wagon's on fire! Sensible PCs should call for help, in which case they will be rescued (favour characters with high Constitution or Bardic professions to throw their voice); not so sensible one's will attempt to escape without such appeals, and will eventually suffer the effects of smoke, suffocation, then burning (p303-304 DMG). Note that fires develop very quickly; within 2 minutes the wagon will be a conflagration and there will be little more than the charred remains of the party.

Assuming that the party have been rescued however, it will be due to the efforts of good fey (the fire being a side-effect of battle, and not deliberately lit). They will inform the party that the leader of the slavers escaped to the north west, towards the lands of the Martu. With the provision of some provisions they are sent on their way. Whilst the various spoils of battle are kept by the fey, it may be possible to negotiate for some of these (Diplomacy DC 20+). Naturally enough, Martuel has escaped on camelback with the best of the PCs equipment, including magic books, items and so forth. Inventive PCs may find a way to give chase (e.g., sorcerers may rest for several hours and cast Overland Flight) but will not be able to find Martuel; in reality the slaver is actually a Blue Dragon and, once having put enough initial distance between himself and the others, simply polymorphs and disappears. As for the attackers, he cares little as the treasure hoard of the party is much greater than the value of any slaves and is quite happy simply to leave rather than reveal his special personage.

Diprotodon

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Size/Type: | Large Animal |
| Hit Dice: | 8d8+40 (76 hp) |
| Initiative: | +0 |
| Speed: | 30 ft. (6 squares) |
| Armor Class: | 13 (-1 size, +4 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 16 |
| Base Attack/Grapple: | +6/+18 |
| Attack: | Charge and Trample +6 melee (1d6+12) |
| Space/Reach: | 10 ft./5 ft. |
| Special Attacks: | Nil |
| Special Qualities: | Low-light vision |
| Saves: | Fort +11, Ref +6, Will +3 |
| Abilities: | Str 26, Dex 10, Con 21, Int 1, Wis 13, Cha 2 |
| Skills: | Listen +14, Spot +3 |
| Feats: | Alertness, Endurance |
| Environment: | Plains, Light Woods |
| Organization: | Solitary |
| Challenge Rating: | 3 |
| Treasure: | None |
| Alignment: | Always neutral |
| Advancement: | 9–12 HD (Large); 13–24 HD (Huge) |
| Level Adjustment: | — |



The Diprotodon is an unintelligent megafauna version of the Bunyip. It inhabits light forest, woodlands, and grasslands, and eats leaves, shrubs and grasses. Growing to ten feet from the elongated nose to stubby tail and 6ft high the Diprotodon weighs up to 6,000 pounds. Hunted by the indigenous fey of Ralis, the Diprotodon is considered especially good eating and local shaman-druids are often required to argue with tribes concerning overhunting, as it is not a particularly smart beast and is easily caught. Albion, Iberian and Zeelanders traders have found that the Diprotodon can be trained to pull wagons and a particularly useful when traveling over plains as long as there are regular stops for water.

Three Colours Green: Lands of the Martu

The journey to the lands of the Martu takes approximately a week through searing and arid country. Variation is from rocky to sandy desert features (DMG p91) with the heat (75-110 degrees F, 23-43) and lack of water (p304 DMG) being notable. Whilst trivial spells can alleviate these effects, if the party is with a larger group (e.g., fellow escaped slaves) it is possible that they will encounter some difficulties. More than a danger, the descriptive effects of the climate should be sufficient for narrative purposes, emphasising that without the aid of magic that the party would find it very difficult indeed to survive in these conditions (especially for those who insist on wearing plate armour!).

Eventually the party will reach the lands of the Martu, which includes a catchment area, some light forest and lake region. There they will encounter a group of Martu children playing in the lake region, who will be friendly but cautious. At the point when it seems there is some bonding between the native fey and the party, they will be set upon by a herd of ... Demon Ducks of Doom! The children will of course scatter as quickly as possible. There should be ample opportunity for the PCs to engage in heroics. At an opportune moment (e.g., one of the PCs is down, or they are making an overwhelming victory) a group of adult native fey including a numebr with bullroarers, which act as instruments for the tribe's bards who will cast the appropriate spells to drive the remaining Bullockornis's away.

Bullockornis (Demon Duck of Doom)

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Size/Type: | Large Animal |
| Hit Dice: | 5d8 (25 hp) |
| Initiative: | +2 |
| Speed: | 60 ft. (12 squares) Flight or 40 ft (8 squares) normal. |
| Armor Class: | 13 (-1 size, +4 natural) |
| Base Attack/Grapple: | +4/+15 |
| Attack: | Bite +7 (2d6+3) |
| Space/Reach: | 10 ft./5 ft. |
| Special Attacks: | Power Attack |
| Special Qualities: | |
| Saves: | Fort +9, Ref +9, Will +4 |
| Abilities: | Str 17, Dex 11, Con 19, Int 3, Wis 8, Cha 2 |
| Skills: | Listen +14, Spot +10 |
| Feats: | Alertness, Power Attack |
| Environment: | Lakes, Marshes |
| Organization: | Solitary or herd (2-12) |
| Challenge Rating: | 4 |
| Treasure: | None |
| Alignment: | Always neutral |
| Advancement: | 6-8 HD (Large); 9-11 HD (Huge) |
| Level Adjustment: | — |

The Bullockornis (aka Demon Duck of Doom) stood



over 8 ft and weighed 550 lb. Their shearing beak indicates a omnivorous diet within the lakes and marshlands it inhabits especially some of the megafauna that seek such locations for food and drink. With a Power Attack it will often drop bonuses to hit in favour of bonuses to damage. Although morphologically flightless, some have been enchanted as per the spell. The duck can swim, and duck-dive, for aesthetic reasons.

Returning as guests to the home of Martu, tribal elders will explain how the lands to the west and north are ruled by great dragons who have found willing foreigners to carry out their deeds. If Martuel is asked after they are certain that he would have travelled to Finisterra, the home of the Iberians, which is ruled by a great Green Dragon, Dragao Verdu, who is in conflict with a great Red Dragon who rules over the Zeelanders. Although, the elders mention, Martuel had been seen with in the lands near the dreamplace where the Blue Dragon resides. Between the Red and the Green and much further inland "in a hidden dream" is the Blue Dragon, the greatest and most wicked of them all. Some tribespeople, whether by choice or force, are taken to the home of the Blue where they are transformed into Dragons themselves (albeit on a smaller scale); one of the people taken recently includes an elder's daughter. The home of the Blue is protected by Mimi, very dangerous earth spirits. It is known that the Green Dragon rules a land that is densely forested and that the magic from the spirit the sandalwood tree is used there, whereas the Red Dragon uses the spirit from iron rock to build powerful tools.

Three Colours Green: La Finisterra

Whilst it is possible that the party may wish to go in another direction in all probability they will want to continue giving chase to Martuel, or even more so, the equipment he has taken. The Martu will provide a scout who can take the party to the borderlands of the La Finisterra region, which involves travel through several other fey tribes. Each of these have to be carefully negotiated and, assuming success, each will have a similar story - that the Iberians and the Zeelanders (depending on location) raid the tribe, taking people away. Some have escaped and have told the local populations of great gatherings of humpies and exceedingly cruel masters.

"After a few days journey we arrived at the lands the Nyangumarta. This was a wide and open land, even more so than that of the Martu, and there was some animated conversation between our scout and the fae that we encountered. Our scout proudly informed us, much to our horror, that the Nyangumarta were pleased that some good white folk had come to save them from the wicked Iberians and once they had done so, would we be so kind to do the same to the Zeelanders? We scolded our scout at this, for our journey was supposed to be somewhat secretive, but he made up for it quickly, as the Nyangumarta collected a score and five doses of the desert herb to alleviate the condition of the spell-casters. Later we discovered that it was through these lands that Zeelanders and Iberians often came into conflict, with the Nyangumarta suffering at the hands of both."

From The Journal of Brother Ney, Winter 1321 Solar Year.

The lands of La Finisterra are bordered by a series of incredibly chaotic and steep ranges, rough land with thick grasslands and high trees. This hilly region, the Bulga Bulga, would soon turn into heavy jungle with numerous rivers and swamplands. Among these lands are ten townships surrounding the court of La Finisterra itself, and each township in turn has a number of elegant manor houses on their outskirts, usually consisting of a two-story house, a chapel, and stables. There are rough tracs approximating a road between the manor houses and the towns and something more serious between the towns themselves. Each manor has approximately fifty residents, typically an Iberian extended family (about fifteen people in total) and a larger number of fey slaves (about fifty), of various local and nearby tribes. In townships the ratio is similar; approximately one hundred residents with 2/3rds fey slaves and 1/3 Iberians. The court, La Finisterra, is about five times that size. About 2/3rds of each population are combat-capable, with the maximum level of a character within a town equating to around 10 and in a village to 7. Iberian spell-casters have one exceptional advantage; they have learned how to distill and harness the magical power local sandalwood which gives them excellent spell potency; about three levels higher than their actual level.

Again, a number of options are available here for the party. The playtest group adopted a strategy of 'slave rebellion',

overcoming disparate manor houses and giving rise to a coherent force to liberate towns themselves. Keep in mind that manors, especially those on the border regions, are very attentive to possible invasions giving their war-footing with the Zeelanders. Successful rebellions will quickly inevitably lead to even more vigilant watches by the Iberians and the organisation of a military force, with a number of fey assistants. Raising a slave rebellion brings its own logistical problems, including where to hide them, the provision of food and water, and the fact that the overwhelming majority would much prefer to go back home to their tribe and family rather than face death at the hands of the Iberians. Many will be suspicious of foreign colonists as their only experience has not entirely been pleasant; they will react well however for promises of freedom, a decentralisation of authority (even if it generates worse results) and so forth.

Another option, or perhaps combined with the first, is entry into La Finisterra itself, a coastal town. Facing the ocean is the Green Dragon's castle. As a whole the streets are dirty, with open drains, with animals (pigs, chickens, goats, buffalo) freely roaming about in significant numbers. The town is hot, humid and prone to disease. Entering the city is difficult for characters who are not Iberians and disguises will be both necessary and difficult to maintain. It is possible that the party will find themselves either caught and thrown to the arena or brought to the attention of the Merchant's Syndicate (which, surprise me, is also the local thief's guild). If the former is the case they will find themselves armed with some normal weapons to confront some of the natural horrors of the land as previously detailed on one-to-one combat. Obvious creatures like giant spiders can be found in the Monster Manual (p288). The gladiator school is run by Timbu, a 10th level Barbarian/10th level Monk gladiator trainer. Timbu is wealthy and well-looked after and will fight to maintain his position. Magic Items in his possession include Vorpal Great Axe +3 and a Studded Leather Shirt +3 with Heat Protection, 3 Potions of Love (which he will use on any character with a CHA of 15 or more, a potion of Fly and two potions of Cure Serious Wounds, plus 10,000 gold pieces in mundane equipment, gems, jewels, gold etc.

In either case the party should become aware that the economy of La Finisterra is in dire straits. For several years now the Green Dragon has been forcing the manor farms to extract excessive amounts of sandalwood resin which is then shipped off to the court. It is there it will become known that the Green Dragon intends to engage in a great ritual with 100 loyal servants of the Church of the Sand Dragon at the stadium after the arena battle. The Church of the Dragon consists was established by the Green Dragon when it took control of the Iberian court as the representative of the distant crown. A much smaller old doctrine Church of the Sun remains. Whether through careful investigation, or a successful Spellcraft or Knowledge (Arcana) test on the day, it is discovered that the purpose of the ritual and the burning of massive barrels of sandalwood oil is for the creation of one hundred more dragons. Obviously enough the party will attempt to prevent this and at an opportune moment Manuel will transform into young adult Blue Dragon, slay many of the Green's ritual participants before fleeing the scene. Further, as a point of further plot development, it is essential that the Green is not killed by the PCs but rather is subdued.

The hour long ritual itself involves about 100 cult members (levels 5-10), protected by 200 soldiers (mainly levels 3-5), although the critical component takes over only 10 minutes. There will be significant smoke involved from the burning of the sandalwood for the mass permanent polymorph, and after five minutes a partial transformation will be complete (claws, armour). At the seventh minute Manuel, a participant in the ritual, will transform into his draconic form (a Mature Blue Dragon) and attempt to attack the Green with surprise etc. and attempt to subvert the ritual. If either succeed then they will have one hundred new dragons (either Green or Blue, young adult) which should be an end-of-story point...

The Church of the Great Dragon (a usurper Church to the Sun God), includes 80,000 gold pieces of sandalwood oil, other woods, spices, gems, gold, artworks in Palace. 10,000 gp of gems and plantinium coins and an interesting object; a Spear of the Mimi (Spear +4, Intelligent INT 12, WIS 15, Detect Evil, Locate Object, Speech), 2 Potions : Love, Oil of Timelessness Scroll: Finger of Death, Summon Monster VII, Mass Invisibility, Clone, Mass Charm, Sympathy, Time Stop, Weird, Wish and a wondrous item; A book entitled Cryptomenysis Patefacta. Reading it will cause a gain of INT, but an equivalent loss in WIS as the character goes mad. The problem is the book is addictive as well, requiring WILL saves versus 20, 25, 30 etc. Roll once per month.

Dire Dropbear

Size/Type: Medium Animal

Hit Dice: 5d8+20 (45 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 50 ft. (10 squares) Climb 30ft (6 squares)

Armor Class: 18 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +4 natural)

Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+17

Attack: Bite +13 (1d8+10)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Low-light vision

Special Qualities: Scent

Saves: Fort +9, Ref +9, Will +4

Abilities: Str 25, Dex 15, Con 19, Int 4,

Wis 8, Cha 6

Skills: Balance +5, Climb +5, Hide +5

Feats: Alertness

Environment: Forests

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 5

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 6–8 HD (Large); 9–11 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment: —



The Dropbear is a savage forest-dwelling carnivorous marsupial that typically attacks with surprise from aboreal heights. A giant mutant cross between a tasmanian devil and a koala and weighing in at approximately 120 pounds despite its small size, it is not known for a pleasant attitude. The jaw of a dropbear is particularly damaging with strength far exceeding what it is normal. The dire dropbear will normally consume an entire carcass, bones and all. The application of yeast extract over one's body creates an pleasant odour to the Dropbear which will make no aggressive action against a person so covered, unless they initiate combat.

Dire Echidna

Size/Type: Augmented Animal

Hit Dice: 5d8+30 (55 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armor Class: 22 (+2 Dex, +10 natural)

Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+15

Attack: Tongue +8 (paralysis), 2 Claws +8 (2d4+5), Spikes +8 ranged (1d8+2, 19-20)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Paralysis, Spikes

Special Qualities: Low-vision, Scent

Saves: Fort +9, Ref +9, Will +4

Abilities: Str 21, Dex 13, Con 19, Int 4, Wis 8, Cha 3

Skills:

Feats:

Environment: Forests, Warm Plains

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 5
 Treasure: None
 Alignment: Always neutral
 Advancement: 6–8 HD (Large); 9–11 HD (Huge)
 Level Adjustment: —

The omnivorous dire echidna is a particularly tough and well-armoured creature with the capacity to fire spikes or use a paralysing tongue with equal poison as a carrion crawler. Unlike other dire marsupials the echidna is an egg-laying creature, and prefers to live in underground nests. It has no sense of social organisation. Although sluggish and defensive by nature, a dire echidna will become aggressive if hungry or provoked.



Dire Boxing Kangaroo

Size/Type: Large Animal
 Hit Dice: 9d8+15 (60 hp)
 Initiative: +3
 Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)
 Armor Class: 15 (+4 Dex, +1 natural)
 Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+18
 Attack: 2 Kicks +12 mellee (4d4+6), 2 Punches +9 (2d4+6)
 Space/Reach: 5 ft./10 ft.
 Special Attacks:
 Special Qualities:
 Saves: Fort +12, Ref +12, Will +5
 Abilities: Str 22, Dex 18, Con 19, Int 4, Wis 8, Cha 5
 Skills: Balance +15, Jump +40, Listen +12, Spot +12
 Feats: Improved Unarmed Strike
 Environment: Arid Grassland
 Organization: Herd
 Challenge Rating: 5
 Treasure: None
 Alignment: Always neutral
 Advancement: 10–12 HD (Large); 13–15 HD (Huge)
 Level Adjustment: —

The dire kangaroo is notable for its large powerful legs, thick tail, and bounding gait. The powerful hind legs work incur no penalty for jumping from standing and a +10 bonus to jump checks. Usually peaceful herbivores but can be provoked. Typical attack is to grapple first with the forepaws and then kick with the rear, using the tail for balance.

Three Colours Red : Revolution and Invasion

With a combination of slave rebellions and an overthrow of the Green Dragon's rule, it is likely that the representatives of the Town Council will seek to assert their authority in the circumstances. The representatives and general person and political orientation consists of:

José Eduardo Santos Tavares Melo Silva: Local merchant (Rogue, Level 10) interested in trading relations, greedy, intelligent, republican. Has lots of connections with the underworld, indeed runs the thief's guild.

António Borges Maria Santos: Old nobility (Fighter, Level 10). Conservative. Wants re-establishment of attachment to Iberian crown and kingdom. Which would be him, of course.

Luís Pereira Siqueira Campos: Bishop (Priest, Level 10). Sees adoption of heinous pagan fey cultists as problem. Conservative, very overweight, prone to outbreaks of righteous indignation alternating with indulgences. Will probably side with Antonio but can be bribed by Jose. Will oppose Joao.

João Abel Manta: Professor (Wizard, Level 10). Old radical who has bided his time over the years. Sees opportunity to build a new society based on his grand utopian plan. Absent-minded when it comes to mundane things. Doesn't really understand bad behaviour by others. Plenty of support from the youth and radicals in the city.

Shortly after getting the beginnings of governance together however the forces of the Red Dragon, Koning Draak Rood, will lead an attack with his Zeelander forces. The Red recognises an opportunity to expand his kingdom and perhaps even, given enough time, build sufficient resources to take on the eldest of the brethren, the Blue.

The Zeelander lands, to the south, are much drier than those of the Iberians and typically consist of rolling arid hills with naught but a few stunted plants. But just as the Iberians have control over the magical sandalwood plant, the Zealanders mine 'fire iron', a magical metal used in the construction of their half-sized golems which make up the elite of their army. The Zealanders are numerically inferior (about 2/3rds) of the Iberians, but have vastly superior technology (steel and steam). The court of the Red Dragon Kingdom is Neu Arnhem with a population of about 2,000 of which 700 are Zealanders (about 400 that combat able). Most of the Fey are combat able. There are six other towns; Rottsnest (high Fey population), Frisia (rural), the semi-independent Graafschap (marches), Gronardin (military, high Zeelander population), Zeist (religious centre), and Staalstad (mining and manufacturing town). These tend to have about 100 people in each, of which about 40 are Zealanders (30 combat able). Typically, most of the Fey are combat able. In addition there are about 20 villages with about 65 people in each (50 Fey and 15 Zealanders).

Discovering exactly what forces the Zealanders have can be achieved through Fey scouts, the Iberian fleet (which will unearth - or 'unsea'?) a flotilla of Zeelander ironclads, which are few (6) but powerful and will be able to engage in a bombardment of La Finisterra, causing widespread panic if unchecked. The total Zeelander land force consists of three groups of about 800; 500 Fey and 300 Zealanders, of which 100 appear to be very heavily armoured. All the Zealanders are armed with guns (1 shot per 3 rounds, 3d6 damage) and they have a number of cannon (1 shot per 20 rounds, 10d6, explosive, 20 ft burst radius, DC 20 Reflex). They are also armed with steel (+2 to +4 weapons, swords) and armour. The Fey are have light armour and crossbows. Advanced information will reveal all of the above plus information about the supply lines to the towns, which are about two days ride away. The invading forces are very dependent on the fortified town of Gronardin and the rural town of Frisia. The leaders of the invading forces are Gustaaf Willem van Imhoff a particularly cruel individual, disliked by many of the Fey (and admired by others), Adriaan Valckenier, a calculating individual and capable engineer, and Abraham Kuyper, a religious leader (fire and war domains). Further, it is revealed the Fey have smoke grenades.

During the course of the invasion the PCs may note that José Eduardo Santos Tavares Melo Silva's ships are not damaged by the bombardment, if it occurs, nor are his bases in the city attacked. As a smuggler by profession he made contact with some of the captains on the Zeelander side, who bribed their captains and so forth. Evidence of this can be found if a Zeelander ship is captured and the captain's quarters searched. António Borges Maria Santos will constantly pester the PCs on strategy, allegiance to the Iberian Crown and will generally recommend leading a mighty army to confront the enemy head-on in a display of grandeur and nobility. Luís Pereira Siqueira Campos iss engaging in correspondence via trusted Fey scouts with Abraham Kuyper and expresses concern about the PCs friendship with the indigenous Fey, and João Abel Manta: Has been in communication with Cornelis Lobry de Bruyn, a neutral Zeelander scientist in Staalstad. He is using loyal young Fey to pass on information via message sticks. The information back from Cornelis reveals the quintessence of the fire element using in machination. João hasn't considered it important(!) to reveal this to the party. It can be discovered if the PCs lead a land-scouting party as the Fey with the message stick

(Jack) is wounded in an attack in his leg and becomes most concerned that he can't pass the message on to an off-sider on the Zeelander camp, Penning. For running the inevitable skirmishes and mass battles, use the rules provided in the D&D Miniatures Handbook (pp83-162). In the course of the playtest, the Iberians retreated to a village, and successfully defeated one major army and scattered a second, before adopting a campaign of guerilla warfare with emancipated Fey and the remenants of the Iberian kingdom; they also established one the PCs as their new head-of-state.

The Iron Warriors

Basically, a half-sized and half-powered Iron Golem.

HD 9D10+15 (65 hp) Init -1 Spd 20 ft, AC 19 (all natural, DEX-1), Attack +6 Pike/TH Sword, Crossbow, no breath weapon, DR 5, low light vision, Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +4 STR 21, DEX 9, CR 7 each

Immunity to Magic (Ex): An iron golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the creature, as noted below.

A magical attack that deals electricity damage slows an iron golem (as the slow spell) for 3 rounds, with no saving throw.

A magical attack that deals fire damage breaks any slow effect on the golem and heals 1 point of damage for each 3 points of damage the attack would otherwise deal. If the amount of healing would cause the golem to exceed its full normal hit points, it gains any excess as temporary hit points. For example, an iron golem hit by a fireball gains back 6 hit points if the damage total is 18 points. An iron golem gets no saving throw against fire effects.

An iron golem is affected normally by rust attacks, such as that of a rust monster or a rusting grasp spell.

Construction: An iron warrior's body is sculpted from 2,000 pounds of pure iron, smelted with rare tinctures and admixtures costing at least 3,000 gp. Assembling the body requires a DC 20 Craft (armorsmithing) check or a DC 20 Craft (weaponsmithing) check. CL 16th; Craft Construct, geas/quest, limited wish, polymorph any object, caster must be at least 16th level; Price 75,000 gp; Cost 40,000 gp + 2000 XP.

Three Colours Red: Yarragan's Revenge

At this point the story strongly derives from the "Pride of Yirrimburra" and "City Beneath The Sands", from "Terror Australis" the Call of Cthulhu supplement based in Australia by Penelope Love, Mark Morrison, Larry Di Tillio et. al, a product that deserves particularly high recommendation. A background is as follows; Yarragan was a young man, a member of a fey extended family that lived on the outskirts of Neu Arnhem. One evening, whilst he was out hunting, a group of Zeelander men came to the campsite with ill-intent. An argument erupted leading to a short, but quick fight, as the Zeelander men massacred all members of the Fey family; men, woman and children. Yarragan witnessed this and swore revenge. Travelling alone for many months he encountered The Blue who, seeing an opportunity for revenge, used its otherworldly magics to train Yarragan's already sensitive mind to the path of sorcery and his body to that of a lich. Yarragan, with the agreement of the Blue, has now returned to Neu Arnhem to wreck his revenge. His plan is to destroy the entire town; first by killing the six individuals who carried out the massacre, then by converting them into Dire Wraiths (a variation from Create Greater Undead, p215 PH), then by summoning a force of fire elementals, extended blast fireballs etc. Compared to the previous sessions of some significant battles, the next several sessions play much more like a research and investigation.

By either overwhelming success in the battlefield (unlikely) or subterfuge (probable) the PCs should eventually make their way to Neu Arnhem where they can stay in a house a few leagues from town owned by a "colleague" of José Silva. When the PCs arrive however they find not a welcoming person but a dead body, and one that died of some

terror. A nearby apologetic note makes mention of unspecified past sins. Attempts to Raise Dead etc fail (as the spirit has become Undead). The extensive acreage include a largely deserted mine (except for another body in a similar state). Visiting the town itself (eventually) reveals a number of similar deaths have also occurred. Further investigation at the local parish records gives further information on failed attempts to raise, divination indicating that their souls are not at rest and so forth.

Another potential source of information is the town clerk. A search of these documents indicate that twenty years ago the current mayor of Neu Arnhem was tried for the murder of a number of Fey however the star witness, now the town drunk, did not testify. If the appointed prosecutor is visited, he will, after questioning, admit that a male Fey visited him with threats that many would die as a result of the massacre. If the town drunk is questioned he will, after a great deal of questioning, bribes, cajolment etc, eventually recite how close he was with the local fey community and how the mayor and his men forced him to reveal their campsite, where they were massacred. He was threatened if he testified and has since been drinking his way to oblivion, albeit with some grim pleasure in more recent weeks. He claims that the spirits of the dead still inhabit the place where the massacre took place.

If the PCs go to this place, a gully near the old mine, they will see the entire events 'replayed' at dusk (when the massacre took place). This time however will be different; they will encounter Yarragan and his five - soon to be six - Dire Wraiths. If there are any Fey or Half-Fey in the party Yarragan will attempt to parley rather than hide to reveal his story; this is an interesting moment for a group of even nominally good high-level PCs, to discuss terms with a high-level sorcerer Lich and his small army of Wraiths. One thing is completely certain; Yarragan cannot be swayed from his desire to totally destroy the town of Neu Arnhem. He may be swayed to delay its destruction by a few days, or even not to turn the place into a graveyard of wraiths. But the mayor's soul is his for the taking, and the place will be razed to the ground. Naturally enough the Red Dragon and his clerics will attempt to prevent this, perhaps resulting in an almighty conflict between the two. If Yarragan is successful, is is "mortally" wounded in the attempt, he will ask the PCs to return him to the lair of the Blue, as the thought of being in that being's control for any longer is distressful.

Yarragan's ingress and egress to Neu Arhem is through an ethereal plane portal hidden deep within the mine and which exits on the plateau of the City of the Mimi. The area near the portal has a number of bones nearby, the remains of Yarragan's family killed by the massacre. Stepping within the portal takes one into the ethereal plane, following all the usual rules for that dimension (p53-59, Manual of the Planes).

Yarragan The Lich

20th level sorcerer, medium-sized Undead, augmented humanoid

Hit Dice 20d12 (158 hit points)

Initiative +4

Speed: 30 ft (6 squares)

Armor Class 23 (+4 Dex, +5 armour, +4 bracers of armor) Flat-footed 19, Touch 15

Saves: Fort +6, Reflexes +11, Will +12

Abilities: Strength 10, Dexterity 18, Constitution -, Intelligence 19, Wisdom 14, Charisma 13

Skills: +8 to Hide, Listen, Move Silently, Search, Spot Sense Motive. Concentrate +20, Decipher Script +14, Hide +15, Knowledge Arcana +26, Listen +12, Move Silently +16, Sense Motive +14, Spellcraft +26, Spot +12

Feats: Combat Casting, Empower Spell, Maximise Spell, Widen Spell, Enlarge Spell

Alignment: Neutral Evil

Challenge Rating: 20

Damage Reduction 15 (bludgeoning weapons, magic). Immune to cold, electricity and mind spells.

Bracers of Armor +4, Morning Star of Wounding, Nine Lives Stealer

Phylactry - a "soul rock" - is located with his "friend", The Blue Dragon.

BAB +10/+5, Touch +5/1d8+5+parlaysis (Save vs will for 1/2, DC 21)

Save vs Will for Fear (for 5 HD or lowers)

Save vs Fortification for Paralysis

Turn Resistance +4

Three Colours Blue : The City of the Mimi

The location of the Blue Dragon is not of this plane. Rather it exists at a gateway between this plane and Hell itself. This gateway exists on the plateau of a huge rock formation that overlooks much of the surrounding land. Unusually tall spires of rock jut out of the otherwise flat plateau casting eerie shadows throughout the day. It is here that the PCs must simply wait for the Psychic Storm (p50, Manual of the Planes) to arrive that will open the Gateway to Hell. Whilst the PCs are waiting for this moment, an appropriate character (the carrier of the Spear) will be approached by a Mimi who will invite them inside the hairline fracture of one of the spires. Inside there is a very crowded cavern (not for claustrophobics) with remarkably thin air. These deadly creatures from the Elemental Plane of Earth (cf., Manual of the Planes pp70-74) are tall, incredibly thin, and extremely dangerous rangers and sorcerors. Nevertheless, the Spear, an entrapped Mimi spirit will reveal the behaviour and hopefully good intentions of the party to their colleagues. Obviously the Spear would be liked to be left behind.

If the Mimi are treated well, one will tell the following story of the Blue Dragon was created.

When the people came to the land, they found water. "How delicious it is!" they exclaimed, for before then they had only sand to drink. Rainbow Snake, the essence of water, was glad to see people sip of himself, and he became as proud of these tailless creations of the Great Mother as he was of white grubs and wallabies and the rest of life, for he gave of himself to all.

But The Devil, lord of lifelessness, grew angry as people forsook his grit for the refreshing liquid of Rainbow Snake. Stretching his winds everywhere, The Devil filled the new wells and streams with sand, and left the land parched.

Since they had learned to love water and now were without it, the people began to die.

Troubled by their plight, Rainbow Snake looked high and low for The Devil. When he came to a place where endless waves of sand rippled endlessly, there he found Sand Bat in a black cave stuck right into the sky.

"Devil, why are you so cruel? The people cannot drink sand", Rainbow Snake said. "It is the spirit of me that flows in their veins and it is the spirit of me that babies suck from their mothers. The people need water, not sand."

"That is no concern of mine, the Devil laughed. "The people insult me. They must be punished to notice me."

In the dryness of the Devil's home, Rainbow Snake felt dizzy and uncomfortable. But he had an idea. "Oh mighty Devil," he said, "why do you chose to live in such a bad place as this? This little desert cannot bring you much strength."

"Little desert?" gasped The Devil, "Why, this great desert is the sandiest place in the world! I lead my clan because I hold so much sand."

"I know of a much sandier home," Rainbow Snake swore. "That is why I am surprised to see that you live here, in such a sandless place."

"Rainbow Snake, if there is a sandier place, I and all my clan shall move there and make it our home," The Devil vowed.

Rainbow Snake pointed the way, and the Devil's clan eagerly went there. Rainbow Snake had told the truth, but the sandiest place was at the bottom of the sea in water so deep that only the Devil and a few of his minions were strong enough to free themselves of it. To this day, many lie trapped beneath the sea.

The Devil returned in anger and sought out Rainbow Serpent. He tore the serpent apart, splitting him into many parts, one good as gold, the colour of the Sun, but the rest evil. The Devil separated the spirit of the Rainbow Snake with its body. The spirit was trapped inside a new demon who became Tiamat.

And now the lands are parched and dry, and the dragons seek to rule the people. They are of a broken spirit and because of that they do not love one another like brothers should.

Mimi

Size/Type: Large Elemental Humanoid

Hit Dice: 10d8+15 (65 hp), 5th level Sorceror, 5th level Ranger

Initiative: +8
 Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)
 Armor Class: 21 (+4 Natural, +4 Dex, +3 Size (+4 thin, -1 tall))
 Base Attack/Grapple: +10/+15
 Attack: Spear +10, Nine Lives Stealer
 Space/Reach: 5 ft./10 ft.
 Special Attacks:
 Special Qualities:
 Saves: Fort +12, Ref +12, Will +5
 Abilities: Str 35, Dex 18, Con 5, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 15
 Skills: Hide +20, Move Silently +15
 Feats: Improved Initiative, Alertness
 Environment: Arid Grassland
 Organization:
 Challenge Rating: 8
 Treasure: None
 Alignment: Always neutral
 Advancement: 11–13 HD (Large); 14–17 HD (Huge)
 Level Adjustment: —

When the psychic wind arrives it will correlate with the appears of a great dust storm, the enormity of which cannot be under-estimated. If the PCs have separated themselves, and continue to do so they will soon find themselves utterly lost such is the blinding effect of the dust. The storm will seem to go on for hours, yet in reality on minutes have passed. Almost by pure luck one PC may be able to find the gateway opening, as it changes its precise location each time (DC 35, Spot). The portal appears as yawning black hole, a small 5' area where the force of the dust storm seems abated. Stepping through this portal takes one to ...

Three Colours Blue: Hell's Panoptican

The final setting is hell's panoptican, an introduction which follows the setting and environs as described for the first plane (Avernus) of the Nine Hells in the Manual of the Planes (pp115-123), a place charred in constant fire. In the distance from their exit, the PCs will notice a massive fortress built into a mountain. The fortress consists of thirty cubes, approximating forty by forty (by sixty deep when one gets inside), but angled so that when one enters they are directed to a single point where the Blue Dragon watches everything. Also in this chamber is the Altar to the Chromatic Dragon, Tiamat. Merely touching the altar will summon her, as this is her plane and the possible place of her undoing (her statistics are on p118 of the Manual of the Planes). Also on the altar are five grooves so designed to fit the gemstones of the Dragons of the Billybara, one for the Red, one for the Gold, one for the Blue, and one for the Green - if these are placed in this order in the rainbow motify, Tiamat will be destroyed, and convert into the Rainbow Serpent, who will bring water back to the land of the Billybara.

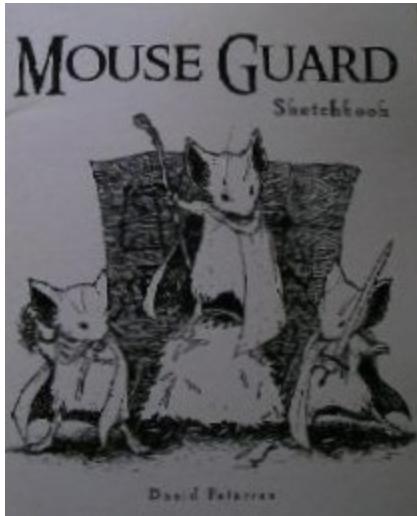
Arriving at such a point however is far from simple. The area is, not surprisingly and like most holy places, protected by gylphs, wards, clairvoyance, forbiddence and so forth. Further, the Panoptican itself is protected by a number of Dragon Shamans of levels 7 - 19; 15 of 7th level, 9 of 9th level, 6 of 11th level, 3 of 15th level, 2 of 17th level and 1 of 19th level, plus, if he is still alive, Manuel. This is, of course, in addition to Ancient Blue Dragon, and possibly Tiamat, depending on whether the Blue realises that the PCs have the gemstones that can destroy his Queen. Dragon Shamans are as described in Players Handbook II p11-19.

Mouse Guard/Warhammer: The Enemy Within

by Lev Lafayette

Based on a playtest on The Enemy Within with: Guardkeeper: Lev Lafayette., Alexandra Donato by Julian Dellar., Fritz Snarble by Sam Sexton., Sven Halleck by Michael Cole., and Renate Hausier by Paul Smith

Background



Mouse Guard is a comic series written and illustrated by David Petersen. It portrays anthropomorphic mice who live in a parallel medieval era. The Mouse Guard is a group of especially brave mice who protect the borders, ensure the paths between colonies are kept open, relay messages and so forth. Mouse Guard the roleplaying game is co-authored by David Petersen and Luke Crane and is based on a simplified version of the Burning Wheel RPG, which Luke also wrote. Mouse Guard received the Origins award for Best Roleplaying Game for 2009. The comic was the winner of "Best Publication for Kids" Eisner Award, for Mouse Guard: Fall 1152 and Mouse Guard: Winter 1152. Personally, I don't really see how it's really for "kids".

The Enemy Within campaign is a series of adventures for Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay (WFRP) and was originally published by Games Workshop in the late 1980s and was voted the best RPG campaign of all time by Casus Belli magazine. The campaign as a whole consists of six campaign packs; "Mistaken Identity", "Shadows Over Bögenhafen", "Death on the Reik", "Power Behind the Throne", "Something Rotten in Kislev"

and concludes with "Empire in Flames". The last two supplements have not been as well received as the first four, and are not used in this cross-over story.

Conversions: Broad Principles

Using the Mouse Guard RPG with The Enemy Within Campaign obviously has numerous points of difference, but quite a few surprising points of similarity.

The obvious differences are setting based. Firstly, the use of anthropomorphic mice vis-a-vis 'standard' fantasy characters. This is not as much a difference as perhaps initially expected because the involvement of non-humans is quite modest in The Enemy Within. More importantly is the conversion of the mundane into the murinae. Humans become mice, horse-drawn carriages become rabbit-drawn (quite a bumpy ride), various animals of husbandry (sheep, cow etc) are right out of the equation, as are cats and dogs. Instead, as the Mouse Guard rulebook states, mice uses beetles, bees and crickets.

Secondly, is the prevalence of magic in The Enemy Within compared to Mouse Guard. Again, this is less of a problem than initially expected. Although the default Mouse Guard setting is pretty much non-magical in the sense of "flashbang" nonsense, there is a sense of "magical realism" being involved. Converting magical effects of this kind In The Enemy Within is less difficult than imagined.

Social and technological issues require more work. Mouse Guard's setting is, as the dates indicated, around the 12th century. For all intents and purposes, the background of The Enemy Within is roughly analogous to the 16th century. This four hundred year difference is significant in terms of population, trade, equipment and so forth. On very

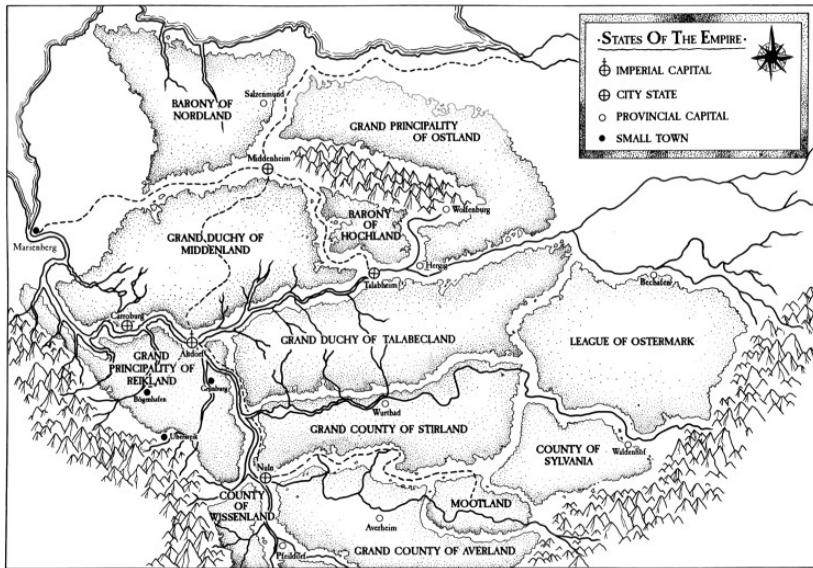
particular example is the existence of weaponry such as the blunderbuss, which is - not surprisingly - completely absent in Mouseguard.

Blunderbuss: Missile Against short-ranged weapons, your Attack action counts as versus action, rather than an independent, against Attack and is independent against a Maneuver. Long Range +1D to maneuver against normal, spear, or thrown weapons. Hard to Defend Add +4D (!) to your Attack versus Defend. These are relatively rare and require a Resourced 3 test to find and purchase.

Somemouse from Somewhere

In Mouse Guard, each mouse town or city has a cultural skill and trait. These can be converted to the Empire without much trouble.

Altdorf Skills; Administrator, Loremouse. Trait; Inquisitive
 Averheim Skills; Apiarist, Harvester. Trait; Hardworker
 Bechafen Skills; Hunter, Scout. Trait; Defender
 Bogenhaffen Skills; Boatcrafter, Haggler. Trait; Generous.
 Carroburg Skills; Carpenter, Laborer. Trait; Calm.
 Grunburg Skills; Cartographer, Miller. Trait; Curious.
 Hergig Skills; Fighter, Militarist. Trait; Cunning.
 Middenheim Skills; Deceiver, Stonemason Trait; Independent.
 Nuhn Skills; Armorer, Smith. Trait; Fearless.
 Pfeildorf Skills; Baker, Potter. Trait; Quiet.
 Salzenmund Skills; Persuader, Weather-Watcher. Trait; Suspicious.
 Talebheim Skills; Cook, Glazier. Trait; Stoic.
 Ubersreik Skills; Pathfinder, Scout. Trait; Graceful.
 Waldenhof Skills; Harvester, Survivalist. Trait; Quick-Witted.
 Wolfenborg Skills; Archivist, Healer. Trait; Clever.
 Wurtbad Skills; Insectrist, Carpenter, Trait; Determined.



Other characters can be extrapolated from the above. The general principle of "two skills, one trait" applies.

Magic and Religion

Magic and religion plays a big part in Warhammer's The Enemy Within. It is much less of an issue in Mouse Guard. With regards to the former, scenario conversion demands that the mundane take over from the supernatural, which isn't too difficult. One does not have to have crawling chaos in order to put a sense of awe and fear into a mouse! For example, a key antagonist in Shadows over Bogenhaffen is the use of rather serious demon and their continuing interest in the town. This is simply converted to no less to an nested owl that lives on the outskirts of town. The narrative remains consistent with tomes on demonic summonings converted to the summoning and control of owls.

Likewise, the most common protagonists in the Warhammer version; everything from mutants, goblins, beastmen and all and sundry can be replaced with "plague mice", which should show all the symptoms of the equivalent of bubonic plague and other delightful infections. They gain an additional degree of horror due to the infectious nature, as any mouse with even Healer 1 should be aware of. There is, of course, no known cure so that mice that come in contact with "plague mice" had best be very careful indeed. The possibility of contracting the disease when in casual contact with a plague mouse or any place where a plague mouse has recently been for an extended period (e.g., a sleeping nest) is approximately 1 in 3.

In the Warhammer version of the scenarios, there are a number of powerful religions such as The Cult of Sigmar. In the Mouse Guard version of The Enemy Within the paranormal veneration of these deities are converted in more secular orders; just as numerous, with equally sufficient devotion on behalf of its members, although their adherence will be to an ethical rather than theological orientation. This applies equally to the various Chaos cults, although their attraction of supposed magical powers is somewhat greater.

Actual Play

Actual Play incorporated the design decisions above with a very high degree of congruence. The initial scenario ("Mistaken Identity") follows the recommendations made; instead of a coach and horse, the Guard travels via a coach pulled by a rabbit. The ambush is not carried out by "half-starved mutants", but rather diseased and maddened plague mice. The boatman remains the same, as mice - at least in the Mouse Guard game - are capable of employing such pilot. In the second scenario ("Shadows over Bogenhafen"), instead of a three-legged goblin at the freakshow there is a six legged mouse afflicted with the equivalent of Down's Syndrome. The drunk dwarf remains a drunk dwarf, but is now a drunk dwarven mouse. Beneath the town, the sewer rats may be ignored or replaced by insects instead. The slime creature should be replaced as being too inappropriate, although some particularly foul normal slime. Instead of a demon, an entrapped bat proved to be a very adequate - and dangerous - alternative. Finally, the summoning of demonic forces, and the changes to the moon and so forth can all be stripped of their highly supernatural content in favour of a more 'magical realist' approach; the book on "demonology" is entitled *On the Summoning and Control of Owls*, which makes up the creature (with chicks) hidden in a dilapidated manor house which, in the original scenario, rather poorly, is presented only a hoax location.

Needless to say, as per the Mouse Guard rules, an owl is quite impossible for a mouse to defeat, although they may escape from such a creature and, with sufficient negotiation, return with a small army to drive it off. In all other respects the narrative is the same; a mouse promises (and provides) the owl a steady supply of food. The ritual is the height of madness and pathology as the cult ringleader sincerely believes that surrendering several well-connected town leaders to the owl will grant respect and power from the owl to the mouse. The owl thinks quite differently.

In "Death on the Reik", the "Beastman" encounter is once again converted to one with "Plague Mice". The pharmacist's herbal concoctions remove conditions (albeit at the price of side-effects and addictions), the wizard and his apprentice specialise in esoteric knowledge rather than spells as such, as do members of the Red Crown. Their activities are just as much full of ritual and all the psychological effects of spell-casters, and they'll have a couple of chemical (e.g., flash and smoke bombs) up their sleeve, quite literally in some cases. The goblins are replaced with more generic outlaw Mice and their wolf mounts can be replaced by surprisingly aggressive rabbits.

Whilst the Druids and Woodsmen are treated as very skilled "woodsmice", the crater of the "devil's bowl" can be expressed in a mysterious, albeit natural manner. The warpstone is, of course, highly radioactive material which provides both ambient energy and causes mutations; the harnessing of such energy and of course the side-effects provides a very interesting alternative to the chaos magic that is presented in the scenario. Such effects like the sudden appearance of the two-headed sheep can be replaced by two-headed beetles, and once again Chaos Beastmen are appropriately changed to plague mice. The degree of the mutations that occur are, of course, immense, as the plot comes to its conclusion...

Usher, A Were-house (for the Hero System)

by Lev Lafayette

One will only encounter Roderick Usher on a dull, dark and soundless day in Autumn, when the clouds hang oppressively low. The were-house will only be encountered in isolated country locations in either Great Britain or the New England region, where the sudden appearance of a dilapidated manor is no cause for sudden surprise. It is plausible that, if Roderick further investigates his powers and perhaps modifies his own cultural presentation through careful study, that he could adapt to any number of cultures where manorial buildings are not uncommon; a Spanish Usher or even a Javanese Usher, is not beyond the bounds of possibility.

Roderick is the last surviving member of the Usher family, and all of the family heirlooms are contained within the manorial home. Every item has historical significance to the Usher family; an entire story can be told of those good, bad and mad. One thing that is certain from any such review is that the Usher family are anything but average. There are examples of extraordinary cruelty, profound generosity, mania and melancholy. Roderick apparently includes them all; he is a walking combination of every personality that has ever headed this household.

Most tragic however, due to his obsessive study of the family and the family house, is a most peculiar form of therianthropy that has affected him. How clever we are to be able to rattle off the forms of this affliction - werewolves, kitsune, werebears, wereboars, and even wererats. But what peculiar form of nagualist transmogrification is it where the ancestral spirits take the form of a living building - the *werehouse*!

In addition to this affliction
Roderick Usher suffers
hyperesthesia (hypersensitivity to
light, sounds, smells, and tastes),
hypochondria (an excessive
preoccupation or worry about
having a serious illness), and acute
anxiety. In his habitual form,
Roderick manifests these
characteristics by only being found
in dark, isolated locations (for
example, deep in mountainous
woodlands is a favourite haunt).
Also in this form the building is
quite capable of putting up a
psychological defence against
unwanted visitors.



The statistics provided here are for the most recent 6th edition of the Hero System. Note that Roderick Usher does not get the discount bonus for "owning" a Vehicle (i.e., 1/5 of the normal cost). Firstly, this is because non-sentient beings are not considered part of a multiform. Secondly, Roderick is much more powerful in his "house" form; his primary form is as the dilapidated gothic manor, his *secondary* form is as a human! Usher does have mostly conscious control over when he engages in a transformation, subject to the partial past personality that is currently afflicting him and the physical complications of his hypersensitivities.

Roderick Usher (Human) Roderick Usher (Base)

Characteristics Characteristics

| Val | Char | Cost | Val | Char | Cost |
|-----|-------|-------------------|-------------------------------|---------|------|
| 10 | STR | 0 | 25 | INT/EGO | 30 |
| 10 | DEX | 0 | 42 | BODY | 40 |
| 15 | CON | 5 | 15 | SIZE | 30 |
| 25 | INT | 15 | 22 | PD/ED | 40 |
| 25 | EGO | 15 | | | |
| 15 | PRE | 5 | KS: Usher Family (24-) 13 pts | | |
| 7 | PD | 5 | PS: Writer (24-) 13 pts | | |
| 7 | ED | 5 | | | |
| 2 | SPD | 0 | Multiple Personalities 40pts | | |
| 14 | REC | 10 | Hyperesthesia 20 pts | | |
| 70 | END | 10 | Hypochondria 5pts | | |
| 10 | BODY | 0 | Anxiety 10 pts | | |
| 40 | STUN | 20 | | | |
| 4 | OCV | 5 | Perks | | |
| 4 | DCV | 5 | | | |
| 13 | OMCV | 30 | Well Off 5pts | | |
| 13 | DMCV | 30 | | | |
| 13 | O/DMC | 60 (House Values) | Talents | | |

Powers

Change Environment 30 points (Broad +1, In House Form Only -1) = 30 pts

Endurance Reserve 30 points (72 END, 18 REC) (In House Form Only -1) = 15 points

Enhanced Senses 48 points (Mental Awareness, Infrared, Ultrasonic, Ultraviolet +10 to all Sense Groups) = 48 points
Mental Blast 5d6 = 50 points

Mental Defense +20 20 points = 20 points

Mental Illusions, 20d6, 100 points (In House Form Only -1) = 50 points

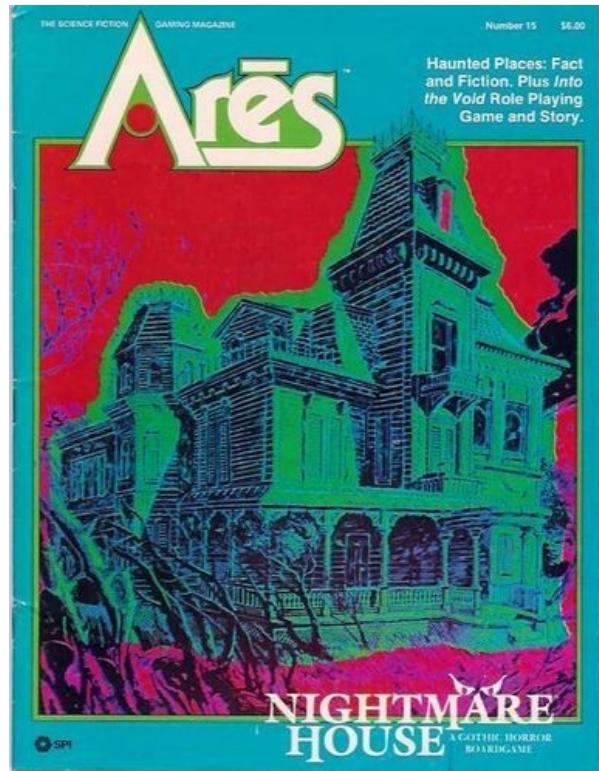
Mind Control, 20d6, 100 points (In House Form Only -1) = 50 points

Mind Scan 5d6, 25 points

Multiform 75 points (Human)

Roderick Usher As An Antagonist

An obvious plot device to have the poor tortured Roderick Usher tell the PCs about his sad family story and to meet him at "the house" at night, where he hopes that they will be able to assist him in overcoming his melancholy. The House of course represents a personality change which engages in a haunted, possessed - and possessing - building. There may already be a number of servants who are subject to the House's powerful (and persistent) Mind Control powers who act as servants to Roderick as well. Through the House's rather impressive abilities to Change Environment, create Mental Illusions and so forth, the House of Usher at first toys with any characters so unfortunate to spend an evening within its walls, then it slowly breaks down their mental defenses in a classic "haunted house" setting, before unleashing the Mind Control. The House is particularly fond of engaging in the latter well after the Illusions have broken the grip on reality that the characters might have. Given the enormous variation of character actions and reactions and the innate flexibility of the House, any GM must prepare well in advance possible uses of the antagonist's powers. As a very radical alternative, one may consider making use of the Ares Boardgame "Nightmare House", published in 1983, as a source.



Saif Alim, Sword of Shadows (Middle Earth)

by Michael Cole

The Saif Alim, or Sword of Shadows, was originally forged Celebrimbor gift to Dammoth, the guard-captain of Annatar, in around SA1400. At that time, it was named Morlas. Annatar was the pseudonym used by Sauron during his time in Ost-in-Edhil. It next reappeared in history as an heirloom of the House of Gamail, though to have been the sword of Gamail himself. Gamail first arrived in Middle Earth from Númenor with Adunaphel in around SA2000. At some stage, it seems to have picked up some sort of self-awareness, and seems to be able to bind itself to its bearer.

It is a long-sword, with blade of black meteoric iron fashioned in a curious leaf style, where the blade comes out of the hilt and then widens slightly before narrowing to a sharp point. The blade will always feel cold to the touch, even if heated. It tends to absorb light, and does not reflect any light shone on it. The hilt is relatively simple, being bound in black leather, and having silvered steel cross-hilts and pommel. The pommel is designed like the head of a very short-muzzled drake, and merely contains two small bluey-black gemstones as eyes as its only ornamentation.



Middle bronze age leaf-shaped bronze sword; image from London Museum

The sword bonds with its user, in that it both feels and performs differently depending on whether its user is its lawful owner. It appears to be able to choose its master, and so far, its master has always been the heir of the House of Gamail. For an unlawful user, the sword will feel heavy, awkward and unbalanced, and will be dull and difficult to use. It will exhibit no special powers, and will give the impression that it is more of a display only sword – certainly no use in combat. For its lawful user, it will feel light and easy to use, almost like a rapier. It will be extremely sharp, able to cut through limbs and even torsos with some effort. Its other powers are responsive to the user's own powers – the owner will need some affinity with the area in order for those powers to manifest, and the extent of the power increases with the intrinsic ability or power of the user.

When the hilt is grasped and the user concentrates, it will allow the user to hear and discern very faint sounds. Note

that it does not allow filtering of sounds, a very loud sound will still drown out all other, but sounds indiscernible by others may be heard and then “cycled” through. When the hilt is grasped and the user concentrates, it will allow vision into the Shadow Realm. The user will be able to see and interact with all creatures that live either partially or fully on that realm, and will see them as they are. The drawback to this is that the Shadow Realm dwellers will be aware of the exercise of this power, as the user will become more “real” to them. The user will remain visible to those in the real world. When the hilt is grasped and the user concentrates, it will allow the user to effectively “blur” in his movement – to step into another dimension where travel is a lot quicker due to distance being a lot smaller, and then coming back out at the end of the journey.

This other dimension is akin to the shadow world, in that it is extremely cold, grey and empty. This is not instantaneous, 10 feet in the real world may equate to a single step in the “blur” world, and 20 yards may equate to 10 steps. It does have the added bonus in that real world obstacles such as rivers can be avoided as they don’t exist in the shadow world, but long constant journeys should be avoided, simply because the “blur” world is so cold that any extended period of time spent could cause hypothermia. They can also be hazardous in that the walker needs to be pretty confident of his destination so that he or she doesn’t “pop out” off the edge of a cliff in mid air – the drop doesn’t exist in the blur world. Generally speaking, if the user would be going to pop out in an obstruction, they will be pushed into an open area, possibly causing a noise. The user, if skilled enough, can even pull in others who are touching him, although if the passengers let go halfway, they will immediately pop out. The entire experience can be extremely disconcerting to those who aren’t expecting this.

The sword has one (known) drawback, in that it will encourage recklessness in its owner – almost like a small voice is whispering, “Go on, give it a go. It’ll be fine, you can do it.” This tends to come and go, and is not constant. There exists one last (known) power of the sword, which was not initially known of until recently, in that it has some sort of ability to be able to call back the *fëa* of its deceased master, if it so wishes. This is only known to have occurred once, and it was not perfect, causing some amnesia and confusion.

This remains the great unanswered question of Saif Alim; to what degree is the user of the blade their own master, and to what degree have they become influenced by an increasingly apparent personality of the sword itself. Further, how was this spirit embodied in the blade in the first instance? Was it part of the creation process by Celebrimbor? In which case, what does this make the smith, one who can create souls? Or was a previous living source required, perhaps a more frightening prospect! These questions, for the time-being, remain unanswered.

Saif Alim in Iron Crown Enterprises Middle Earth Role Playing

+30 broadsword for lawful owners, -30 otherwise.

Sly Ears (Essence Perceptions) at will, but character is in the Shadow Realm.

Leaving I (Loft Bridge) at will, but character is in the Shadow Realm.

Undefined Channeling spells, as determined by the sword's internal spirit.

Saif Alim in Decipher's Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game

+5 longsword (to skill use and damage) for lawful owners, -30 otherwise.

+5 to hearing-based Perception ability at will, but character is in the Shadow Realm.

"Teleportation" (blur), to 100' distant with no intervening barriers, at will, but character is in the Shadow Realm.

Undefined Healing spells, as determined by the sword's internal spirit.

Splice Movie Review

by Andrew Moshos



dir: Vincenzo Natali

Ah, Canadians. They make different films from the rest of the world, don't they? Even though almost every single Hollywood flick that gets made seems to get made in Canada, there is a world of difference in style and sensibility between the two rival North American empires.

Vincenzo Natali came to prominence when he made a flick called *Cube* oh so long ago now. Whatever its merits, a lot of people talked about the flick for long enough that it established a career for what I'm sure is a sweet, sweet man (for all I know he stabs puppies in his spare time).

He has a reputation for make relatively low-budget high concept science fiction flicks that are ultimately, in my humble opinion, thoroughly ridiculous. The ridiculousness doesn't completely detract from the interesting elements of his flicks, because he knows how to put them together in a competent fashion. Yet something always happens to make you doubt your commitment to his singular lunacy at some stage of his flicks. Like night following day, like hangover following binge, his flicks always, always go wrong at some point. It's a lovely kind of wrongness, however.

Cube seemed to be going okay until a last minute decision was made to have a character go bugfuckingly insane for no reason and start killing people for no reason. *Cypher* seemed to be going okay until Lucy Liu's character started talking. Nothing, well, his film called *Nothing* was nuts from the start, but at least it was enjoyable for what it was: a completely nuts story about two loser guys who accidentally destroy the entire universe. Don't think that I didn't notice one of the main characters here wearing a *Nothing* t-shirt for most of the film, Vincenzo, you self-promoting shill.

The moment where *Splice* goes wrong is arguable. What isn't arguable is that it does go wrong, and irredeemably so, but there's going wrong and then there's going wrong in such a spectacular fashion that it becomes more memorable than if you'd done it right. It's like the difference between crashing your car into a wall at 15 kilometres an hour, versus

drunk driving an aircraft carrier carrying a thousand sports stars and celebrities on fire into a thousand orphanages.

There's jumping the shark, there's screwing the pooch, and, thanks to Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Please Gods Make It Stop Crystal Skull, there's nuking the fridge. I hesitate to try to attain a future consensus that the phrase "fucked the mutant" should be added to that illustrious line-up of immortal phrases for fucking up royally, but I do humbly submit it for your consideration.

Slice is a cautionary tale, as are most science fiction tales, regarding the hot button issue of genetic engineering. Even worse, or more timely, it posits the what if? regarding the creation, by two scientists, of an unholy chimera that contains human DNA. It's also an unavoidable commentary on parenthood, on the terror inherent in become a parent for the first time, and how your children inevitably try to kill you.

Oh, and then there's the whole horrifying Electra complex thing as well...

They, the scientists, start off modestly enough, humbly even. They, being Elsa and Clive, played by Sarah Polley and Adrien Brody respectively, named after the two actors that played Dr Frankenstein and the Bride of Frankenstein way back in the 1930s film that probably no-one remembers, start off by creating these horrible lump creatures they call Fred and Ginger.

These horrible lumpen creatures have DNA from five other species, possibly some plant stuff thrown in there for good measure, and have been created with the intention of synthesising proteins for a pharmaceutical company.

I don't know why they're considered to be the top of their field, because Clive and Else have created the two ugliest looking giant haemorrhoids that I've seen on display since the last Federal election. All the same, the company ominously praises them whilst threatening them with dire financial repercussions if they don't get to the next stage of development by isolating some protein that they need.

Elsa and Clive aren't drab labcoat wearing-drones, happy to squander their remaining time on this planet sequencing animal DNA and spitting in the face of God for profits alone. They want to get to the next level, they want to take it up a notch, and they want to do something they're going to be remembered for.

As such, for reasons that seem like they might have a scientific progress sheen on them as possessing some believable motivation, but are really about doing something ludicrous for our benefit as viewers, at Elsa's instigation, they combine the hybridised DNA of the five animals with a human ovum.

You know as well as I do that it's a bad idea, regardless of where you stand on the issue of genetic engineering, human experimentation or scientists play gods for their own amusement or to work out their own childhood issues. But they do it anyway, because you don't have much of a film if people act sensibly all the time. The film would have been three minutes long, with a few scenes of scientists ethically deciding against doing anything insane, being driven home to their palatial mansions in their Bentley limousines, being waited on hand and foot by hot supermodels of all genders, and falling into a blissful sleep after rubbing themselves in relevant places with their Nobel prizes.

Oh, the life of a scientist is grand.

Instead, these shmucks decide they'll be able to hide from the world a curious creature that is part-girl, part-monkey, part-scorpion, part-frog and part-some flying frilly creature. She's the best that science can construct at this stage.

And, boy, does she grow fast. And she's smart, too. She's so smart that she can spell out how hanging around in dingy dungeons and gloomy sheds doing nothing is tedious using some Scrabble tiles. She learns how to have sex just from watching Elsa and Clive go at it like sedated weasels. And she can do a whole lot of horrible things at a moment's notice, not the least of which is completely changing gender at will.

Of course a lot of it seems like it's a horror flick, that's undeniable. There are parts that reminded me strongly of Alien/Aliens, Species and a few other flicks where pregnancy is equated with some kind of demonic possession/infection. It's a unique kind of body horror (not unique to this movie, I mean unique to this genre in film) which stems from the anxiety, or unease with both the concept of a parasite growing inside one's self, and the fear of one's offspring becoming a monster.

As a parent, I can totally relate. Elsa, here, is shown as having some very screwed-up issues which come to the fore in her 'parenting' of chimera Dren (Delphine Chaneac). There's a particularly bleak scene when the scientist couple smuggle Dren to a property somewhere in the boondocks where Elsa's mother lived up until her death. Upon viewing what was Elsa's childhood bedroom, consisting of a rotting bunch of rags in the shape of a mattress, and some pail or saucepan for a chamberpot, Clive remarks "I thought you said your mother left your room just the way it was." To which Elsa deadpans "She did."

Elsa's wavers between being incredibly protective of Dren, to being viciously callous towards her. We're meant to think that the abuse hinted at in her own childhood is responsible, but there's so much other stuff going on. Clive changes from wanting to murder Dren, to feeling compassion towards her, to doing the unforgettable with something that should never have existed.

They, being the people doing the effects, do a very good job with the CGI making Dren never look too human, with her three-fingered hands and feet / legs like a bird/ kangaroo, and a generally alien manner and appearance. Although the flick definitely crosses the line of good taste (actually, it rubs up against the line seductively before ejaculating all over it), and discards the serious ethical considerations of what these two mad scientists have wrought, it doesn't stint on repercussions for their actions. There's no doubting that the flick thinks this kind of engineering of a human/whatever hybrid is profoundly wrong, but the further (and I guess cinematically interesting) wrongness comes from how they deal with Dren, more so than the horrible things Dren ends up doing.

Adrien Brody is capable of overacting at the drop of a tube of hair gel, but he generally does okay except in these moments where he acts not like a scientist dealing with the impossible would act, but acts like an American Oscar winner playing a scientist like a mobster. Sarah Polley is just about perfect in anything she does, and no less here. Even when I can't believe some of the things her character does, I still believed Polley's convictions about the part. She wavers between taking it seriously and treating it as the shlock lunacy that it truly exhibits. In reality, they're treating it like little more than a Troma film production with a bit better budget and some Quebecois accents, which is all it deserves.

I enjoyed it. It's probably a silly flick deep down, and I'm never going to watch it again, and I wonder how much more horrifying it could have been, or disturbing in David Cronenberg's hands. There's enough of the horror of the body, human or not, with enough phallic imagery to delight even more people than just Canadians.

And the ending? Damn, that's nasty, with final words from Elsa that indicate the eternal hubris of the arrogant scientist, or the one female survivor of a horror flick, take your pick, fans of genetic/ethics horror flicks, you lucky so-and-sos.

6 times I didn't know whether to laugh or cringe multiple times out of 10

--
"How did you know she could breathe underwater? You knew, right?"
- "Uh, right. Yeah, I knew" – Splice.

Originally published at <http://movie-reviews.com.au/content/splice>

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